GAMBIT

Secrets of Chess Transformations

Dražen Marović

Explains how to transform one advantage into another

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Wch	world championship
Wcht	world team championship
Ech	European championship
Echt	European team championship
ECC	European Clubs Cup
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
Z	zonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
rpd	rapidplay game
tt	team tournament
mem	memorial event
sim	game from simultaneous display
corr.	correspondence game
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

Introduction

In writing this book, my intention was to throw more light on the essence of the game of chess, its never-ending changing of values, the unceasing metamorphosis of the three elements it consists of – material, space and time.

We speak of pawns and pieces as material, space is outlined by the chess-board and time is manifested as a lead in development and initiative. I wanted to round off what I wrote in my earlier books published by Gambit. *Understanding Pawn Play in Chess* discussed elementary pawn-structures, *Dynamic Pawn Play in Chess* dealt with the centre and its subtle relation with pawn-formations, while *Secrets of Positional Chess* focused on the strength and weakness of pieces and space. Analysing these fundamental elements which make up the game of chess helped us to sharpen our awareness of those "deep connections between the quality of chess space, the pieces acting in it, and time, which binds the board and chessmen into one inseparable whole". This book examines their interrelations, the constant change to which they are subject, and their constant transformations.

Although pawns and pieces by their very existence remind us continuously of their face value, their only real value stems from what they can actually do on the chess-board. We can speak of their statistical or nominal value, but only in action, in a very concrete position, a very concrete relation of pieces and very concrete space, do pieces acquire their real values.

Their essential property is their unceasing changeability. Here I must remind you of the fact that material is a potential energy of chess. When sacrificed, it either wins material or it generates an initiative, leading to various forms of superiority. The same relations of instability govern the initiative and space advantage. Depending on one another, they grow and weaken, drawing strength from one another. Seizing space and developing an initiative often go hand in hand. The conquered territory strengthens the power exerted by the units in action. The pieces are more powerful when they have more space in which to manoeuvre and their active possibilities multiply until a new metamorphosis occurs, when the initiative either wins outright or is transformed back into material or some other type of superiority. The cycle of transformations ends only when one of the fundamental elements acquires an overwhelming superiority. Practically, metamorphoses end when the game ends.

We shall devote our attention to these themes in a series of relevant positions. As usual in my texts, a wide selection of games, covering more than a century, follows my own experience in teaching chess. Lecturing on various subjects to various age groups in different countries, I taught others, but I also learnt. As far as the selection of material goes, I learnt one thing in particular: different generations perceive a selection of games from their own angle. What is dull and worn out for older generations is often a revelation for young people and vice versa: armed with numerous magazines, computer screens, Informators and kindred literature they often find the games played in our time to be overpublicized. Naturally, a couple of overfamiliar games in dozens is very likely, whatever an author's choice might be – unless one is ready to limit the selection to second-rate examples never published before, which I am not. Besides, the thing that matters is not the age of an illustrative example, but whether it fits the subject and corroborates an opinion, especially if the context is new or the angle of observation changed (even slightly). What also matters is the clarity of such examples. Unfortunately, the mania of rapid tournaments, followed by the progressive reduction of time allotted for the game, takes its toll on the quality of modern competitions. Unless we are discussing hectically and thoroughly explored opening paths, there is less and less to choose from; relevant games for many subjects of general theory are becoming more and more scarce.

Supported by a number of opportunists or short-sighted youngsters in the ranks of professional players, who are ready to cut the branch on which they themselves are sitting for some temporary comforts or unfounded ambitions, our wise leadership say that shortening the time-limit is the best way to win our place on the almighty TV screens. They forget that the fascination with the game is still alive after many centuries not because players used to play blitz, but owing to the high-quality games of classical chess and particularly to the world championship cycle they have been destroying with the zeal which only crass ignorance and poor, provincial mentality can nourish. They are trying to convince us that playing rapidly and using hands more than the brain really matters and makes chess competitive in the big family of sports. However, there is a little problem the wise gentlemen have never thought about. If we ever get the 'desired' place (which, by the way, is a foolish hope indeed!), due to the gradual but obvious decline in the quality of modern rapid competitions, continuing in this direction in a not so distant future we shall have nothing to show to the TV public, no magazines will be worth editing and no books worth publishing. Today we are still fortunate; we can still enjoy the old and the new and we should not miss the chance, even if a couple of examples happen to be well-known and perhaps somewhat irritating. That said, I leave the reader to a selected experience of long, rich decades.

1 Material and Time: Introduction

We have been educated to respect material. From our first steps in chess we have been warned time and again that material matters, that pawns and pieces are valuable. That simple truth stays with us for a good reason, but in the days of our chess apprenticeship it often limits our judgement in a harmful way.

In the early stages of his development, a chess-player memorizes positions as they are: in his mind he sees the board and pieces in the forms, material and colour they are made of. Alfred Binet, the psychologist who became famous from his tests of intelligence, observed chess and chess-players and came to the conclusion that in visualizing the chessboard and pieces there are three categories of chess-players. On the lower level the players tend to see the pieces made as they are; however, on the higher level it is not the material they memorize, but the functions of pieces. What a strong player sees going from position to position of his game are the effects exerted by pieces. On the basis of their functions he memorizes and reconstructs. As Tarrasch put it, he understands "their inner meaning". A strong player's mind has been freed from the board and the set of pieces on it. However, the very fact that pieces are so visible and palpable enhances their importance in our eyes even then when we get rid of the initial infatuation with material forms. In the heat of the chess struggle they become so precious to us that we fear for their destiny. It's not a feigned fear, because we identify ourselves with our king and we feel a threat to the king as a threat to ourselves. Not without reason does a player in trouble blush and sweat: his anxiety is as real as any.

I point out this deep psychological connection between the player and the pieces he governs, because that relation lies beyond each tactical operation involving a material sacrifice. When conceiving a sacrificial combination, we take care of our pieces, no matter whether we see them as they are or as their functions. Before entering a sequence, we wish to be sure what we will get for the sacrificed material. We are very willing to trade material, if it brings more material or, if possible, a crushing attack. It is not by chance that most transformations of material follow that pattern. Old chess authors used to speak of pseudo-sacrifices: what we get is more valuable than what we invest. We like that simple mathematics and we cling to it so fervently that many a player finds it difficult to wean himself away from the habit for his entire chess career. Material remains the priority for these players and consequently they rely primarily on calculation in conceiving a tactical blow.

However, the sacrificial idea is not just a fruit of calculation – at least not with strong professional players. Half a century ago, a Dutch master and psychologist Adrian de Groot prepared tests for players of differing chess strength. The results of the tests led him to note that a strong player first sees the combination and then tries to make it true by precise calculation. De Groot wrote: "A chess master does not calculate more than a candidate; he sees more than a candidate, especially things of higher importance". Decades later, the English International Master William Hartston and the psychologist Peter Wason supported that opinion: "On a low chess level calculation is essential; on a high level, however, it becomes more and more an application of concepts". Correct judgement!

A tactical blow involving a material sacrifice takes form in our mind in a flash of imagination. The picture of various motifs woven into position provokes quick and loose associations of thoughts, so quick and subtle that they never reach the conscious level. All of a sudden we feel there is a tactical solution hidden in the position. Only here starts the conscious process. We must be sure that what we feel is true and we start calculating: one variation after another, a series of lines which must confirm the instinctive impression. Rejecting the unnecessary, we

combine the useful associations into a whole. We start by seeing a combination and finish by verifying its feasibility through prosaic calculation of variations. To imagine and carry out an idea, especially a complex combinative idea, is a creative process which enriches chess and distinguishes it fundamentally from all other games and sports; a fact little appreciated today not only by those who strayed into national federations and FIDE, but, unfortunately, by many players themselves.

On the way, however, there are always various pitfalls to avoid. Firstly, we must stay fully alert to eliminate *zwischenzugs* and counter-sacrifices. *Zwischenzugs* (in-between moves) easily escape our attention. We tend to see the combination as a forceful flow, when a *zwischenzug* breaks the pattern and comes as an unpleasant surprise. Full attention should be turned to the order of moves: strict, precise, move-by-move, continuation-by-continuation. It is preferable to determine all the basic lines at once, but we must remain open to broadening the investigation, if the examined move-order suggests its necessity. A counter-sacrifice is also a dangerous weapon against sacrificial combinations. Often narrow-minded saving of material leads to terminal passivity, while giving material back frees the defender and can bring equality or better. The flow of compulsory moves is broken and material balance is established with an equilibrium between attack and counter-attack. The tension falls, and the initiative dwindles away.

Our next step should be to take care that the opponent cannot simplify into an endgame; the reduction of material softens the attack. With the transition to an endgame, most of the pressure and initiative may disappear, while the importance of the surviving material grows. However, the critical moment of our calculations arises when we reach the point at which material is won and we have to assess the position. One must be certain that the opponent's compensation in the form of a counter-attack or a spatial advantage is not enough to balance or outweigh the material we have gained. Good positional judgement is essential in order to wrap up the whole process securely.

Naturally, there are many types of combinations. Tactical ability exists on many levels. Rather early in our chess development we are capable of seeing and realizing simple forms of tactical sacrifices, most of which are pseudo-sacrifices. Only later on in his career is a chess master capable of seeing beyond common appearances, those deeply submerged links between pieces and chess space which great players grasp at a glance, and which lesser mortals pass by, unaware of their good fortune.

However, the transformations of material we are talking about are not a separate process and they cannot be understood if severed from the time in which they develop. In order to avoid misunderstandings, here it is necessary to determine precisely what is meant by 'time'.

In chess, time is measured by moves. We could say that moves are the rhythm of the game. They are distributed equally to both players. They both always play the same number of moves. No additional move is ever allowed to one or the other – the rules of chess exclude such a possibility. However, there is something that ripples the level flow of a chess game and disturbs the balance. I have in mind the property of moves to produce what we call tempi. Threats narrow the opponent's choice to defensive options, and so propel our own action towards some planned target. We feel as if the rhythm given by the initial distribution of moves has been broken; as if time temporarily stops for the opponent and as if it ticks quicker for us. The pace of the attack is quickened, while the counterplay is apparently frozen. Threats keep the opponent tied up while we promote our own attack.

When carrying out a combinative idea we seek moves that perform multiple activities. It is on them that the forcing character of a combination is based. Threats demand a response and further our plans. We earn time. The more time we earn, the more valuable tempi become. They become more valuable than material or other sorts of advantage.

Mating threats have a high priority and require immediate attention. Attacks on pieces of higher value, and positional threats (like seizing an open file, a diagonal, or occupying a vital square) are common ways to gain tempi. However, when we rely on threats of a less-than-terminal nature to compel responses from the opponent, we need to be alert to *zwischenzugs*.

They can make vital changes in the planned order of moves and may affect the whole combinative idea. A well-calculated order of moves takes into serious account all the possible *zwischenzugs*.

To put it simply, time is evaluated against material and space. An initiative, which is the basic form of time in the game of chess, can be developed successfully if it springs from strength in the critical sector of the board, either because we have more material in action or because we have a high level of coordination. Also, an initiative can be developed if we have a spatial advantage, as this makes it easier to manoeuvre. Often an initiative is countered by an initiative in other sectors of the board: pressure against pressure, attack against counter-attack; then with correct play from both sides the tension will tend to diminish, resulting in a balanced position. If it remains unchallenged, however, an initiative gathers strength and will become unstoppable.

However, I would like to emphasize again, in all these transformations of values special attention must be paid to the final position in which one side wins material, but loses the initiative. The relation between the material gained and the opponent's newly acquired initiative determines our assessment of the position. Having obtained a material advantage we need to be sure that the counter-attack won't gain the upper hand against our material advantage.

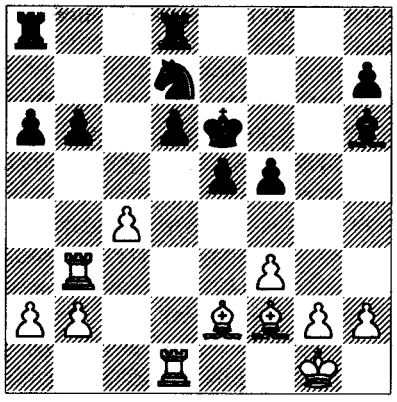
In a nut-shell, initiative tends to be transformed into other elements, notably into a material or a spatial advantage.

That said we shall turn our attention to practical cases and seek practical examples of these situations. Pseudo-sacrifices shall be the topic of the first chapter of our investigation into material and time.

2 Pseudo-Sacrifices

Pseudo-sacrifices are usually obvious to a trained eye, and in most cases they are less deep and aesthetically pleasing than a real sacrifice. However, they occur frequently in practice, offer excellent learning material and are an important step towards higher levels of chess metamorphosis.

First of all we shall examine a small number of typical examples involving either pawn or piece sacrifices.



Smirin – Nakamura
Connecticut 2003

The b6-pawn being taboo, Black's position looks safe. However, an elegant pawn sacrifice now awakens the white bishop-pair, and Black's position starts to fall apart.

30 c5! d5

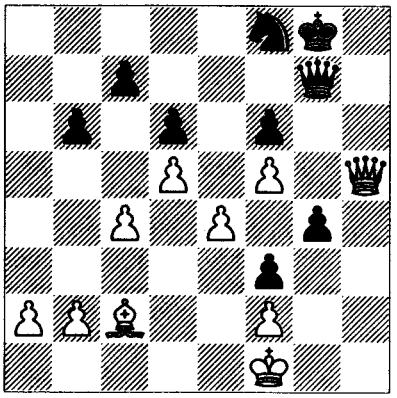
30...bxc5 31 ♗c4+ ♔e7 32 ♗h4+ ♘f6 33 ♖b7+ and 30...dxc5 31 ♗c4+ ♔e7 (or 31...♔f6 32 ♖d6+ ♔g7 33 ♖bd3) 32 ♗h4+ ♘f6 33 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 34 ♖xb6 are also disastrous for Black.

31 c6 ♘f6

Or 31...♘c5 32 ♖xb6 d4 33 c7+ ♖d6 34 ♖b8.

32 c7 ♖dc8 33 ♖xb6+ ♔f7 34 ♖c6 a5 35 ♗h4 1-0

This was a pseudo-sacrifice in its purest form. White offered a pawn to get it back a couple of moves later with additional comforts. How reminiscent of the next example...



Alekhine – H. Johner
Zurich 1934

White's obvious hope is his potential passed pawn on the a-file, but it's a long process, while something must be done at once against the immediate manoeuvre ...♘d7-e5.

44 e5! dxe5?!

I wonder if 44...♘d7 occurred to Black. Then after 45 ♕e8+ ♔h7 instead of seeking a solution in the complications following 46 e6 ♘e5 47 e7? ♕h6 48 ♕g6+ ♘xg6 49 fxg6+ ♔g7 50 ♔e1 g3, when Black is winning, White can simplify into a won endgame by 46 ♕g6+ ♔h8 47 e6 ♘e5 48 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 49 b3, etc.

44...fxe5 is somewhat better, although it is not adequate in the long run after 45 f6 ♕xf6 46 ♕xg4+ ♔f7 47 ♗e4.

The text-move leads to a violent death.

45 d6! c5

Or 45...cxd6 46 c5.

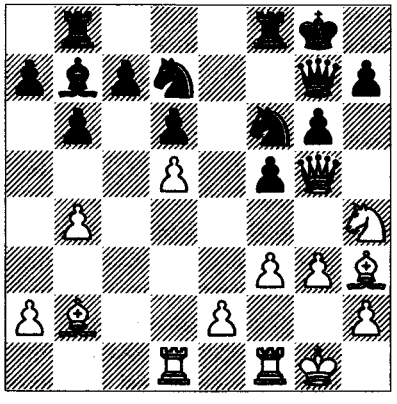
46 ♗e4 ♕d7

Or 46...♘d7 47 ♗d5+ ♔f8 48 ♗c6.

47 ♕h6 1-0

Two pawns were given up for a good cause. However, let us stay a little longer with 'the player who invented the pawn sacrifice'.

W

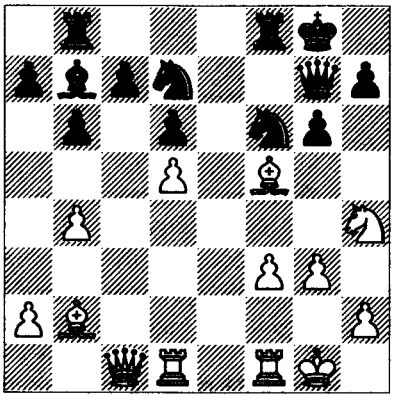


Alekhine – Alexander
Nottingham 1936

Given that 19 e4 apparently fails to 19...♘xe4 20 ♗xg7 (alternatively, 20 fxe4 ♕xb2 21 exf5 ♕f6) 20...♘xg5 21 ♗xf8 ♘xh3+ 22 ♔g2 ♖xf8 23 ♔xh3 ♘f6, when the d5-pawn falls, how should White open the position? Alekhine produced a very convincing answer:

19 e4! ♘xe4 20 ♕c1! ♘ef6 21 ♗xf5! *(D)*

B



White regains the pawn with crushing pressure from his bishops against the black king.

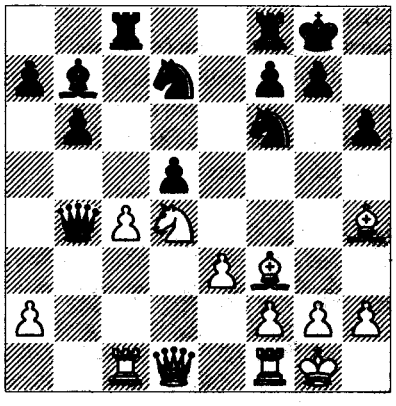
21...♔h8

21...gxf5 obviously loses to 22 ♘xf5 ♕h8 23 ♘h6+. All other moves are hopeless as well.

22 ♗e6 ♗a6 23 ♖fe1 ♘e5 24 f4 ♘d3 25 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 26 g4 1-0

This was again a typical pseudo-sacrifice: the effect is short-term and the risk small. However, there are more borderline cases where there are doubts about the real nature of the sacrifice.

W



Petrosian – Matanović
Portorož IZ 1958

The pin on the long diagonal is a fundamental characteristic of the position and further developments are based on it.

17 a3! ♕xa3?!

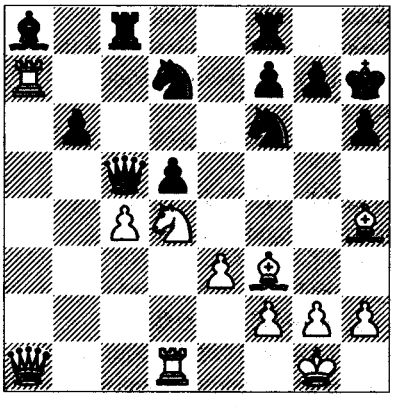
The poisoned gift should be declined, although 17...♕c5 (17...♕a5 invites trouble due to 18 ♘f5) 18 ♘b3 is also difficult for Black.

18 ♖a1 ♕c5 19 ♖xa7 ♗a8 20 ♕a1!

A move of tremendous strength. From a1 the queen's influence is felt across the entire board, to a8 and g7.

20...♔h7 21 ♖d1! *(D)*

B



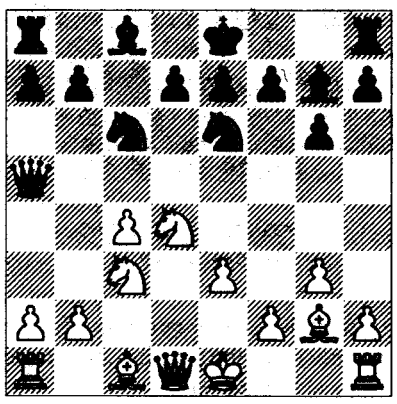
The pressure on the diagonal grows: White threatens 22 cxd5 ♗xd5 23 ♖xd7! and Black is forced to accept the second pawn sacrifice.

21...♕xc4 22 ♗e2 ♕c3?!

22...♕c5, recommended by Romanovsky, fails to 23 ♗d3+ g6 (or 23...♔h8 24 ♗f5) 24 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 25 ♘e6.

23 ♖xa8 1-0

Again we see two pawn sacrifices, both times with rather quick, predictable results, without an element of risk. The next example belongs to the same type, nearer to the real sacrifice but still essentially different.



Sturua – Lalić
Pula open 1997

White might appear to be in some trouble, but he has an elegant solution in the following pawn sacrifice:

11 0-0! ♘cxd4 12 exd4 ♘xd4

12...♗xd4 13 ♘d5 would hardly satisfy Black either.

13 ♗h6!

The pawn sacrifice is based on this tactical solution. Black is suddenly losing his foothold.

13...♗xh6

After 13...♘f5 14 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 15 ♘d5 there is no relief.

14 ♕xd4 0-0 15 ♘d5

White now regains the pawn.

15...♗g7

On 15...♕d8, 16 ♕h4 would win back the pawn, but there is also 16 ♖fe1.

16 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 17 ♕d6 ♕b6 18 c5!

18 ♕xb6 axb6 would obviously give life to Black's undeveloped position. However, White has no intention whatsoever of lessening his grip, and offers a pawn for the second time in the game.

18...♕xb2

The endgame after 18...♕xd6 19 cxd6 ♗xb2 20 ♖ab1 ♗a3 21 ♖fd1 is rotten for Black.

19 ♖fe1 ♕f6

A pawn up but short of viable moves, Black seeks relief in the exchange of queens.

20 ♖ac1

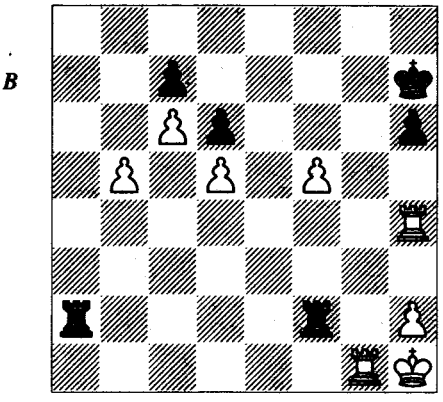
In expectation of the exchange, the rook immediately targets the sitting duck at c8.

20...♕xd6 21 cxd6 ♗b2 22 ♖c2 ♗f6

Or 22...♗a3 23 ♖d1.

23 ♘d5 ♗d4 24 ♖ec1 b6 25 ♘xb6

White's prolonged pressure has finally taken a palpable material form. The first pawn sacrifice, cashed in quickly, was obviously a pseudo-sacrifice, while the second, also a positional sacrifice, produced a huge spatial advantage and emphasized White's lead in development with no risk involved.



Petrosian – Gligorić
Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade Ct 1959

White is two pawns up, but the enemy rooks on the second rank hold him by the throat.

41...♖ab2?

41...♖ac2! would have clearly demonstrated the power of Black's rooks. However, Gligorić thought it was the b-pawn he should control. The punishment was surprisingly effective:

42 b6!

Since after 42...cxb6 43 ♖c1 ♖bc2 44 ♖xc2 ♖xc2, 45 ♖g4! cuts off the king and the black rook cannot hold back two passed pawns on its own, Black is obliged to capture with the rook, which loosens his grip for a precious moment, and this is enough for White to activate his passive h4-rook.

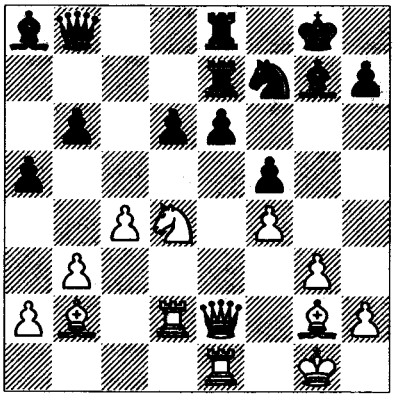
42...♖xb6 43 ♖hg4 ♖b8

43...h5 loses to 44 ♖g7+ ♔h8 45 ♖7g5.

44 ♖g7+ ♔h8 45 ♖7g6 1-0

Black is impotent against 45...♔h7 46 f6 ♖f8 47 ♖g7+ ♔h8 48 ♖xc7; for example, 48...♖f5 49 f7 ♖xd5 50 ♖g8+ ♖xg8 51 fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 52 ♖d7, etc., or 48...♖8xf6 49 ♖d7 ♖c2 50 ♖b1.

Pawn sacrifices in the endgame tend in general to simplify things, but they are not so abundant as in the earlier phases of the struggle. The minor-piece sacrifice, however, is more characteristic of the middlegame. It is a widely used means to expose the enemy king to attack.



Ftačnik – Wallace
Gold Coast 2000

This position is characterized by White's spatial superiority and the weakness of Black's pawn-structure. Yet all Black's weak spots are defended and White's pressure is not yet decisive. White must take action to transform his static advantages.

43 g4!

This increases the pressure to the point where further neutral moves are to no avail. White threatens 44 gxf5 exf5 45 ♕xe7, since the two rooks would be superior to the passive queen.

43...♗xd4+

43...fxg4 44 ♕xg4 is inadequate for Black, while 43...♗xg2 44 ♕xg2 does not really come into consideration either.

44 ♗xd4 e5 45 gxf5!

The point of the pawn advance is in this piece sacrifice.

45...exd4

If 45...♗xg2 46 ♕xg2+ ♔h8, then simply 47 f6 ♖g8 48 fxe7.

46 ♕g4+ ♔h8

46...♔f8 is strongly met by the prosaic 47 ♖xe7 as well as the elaborate 47 f6 ♖xe1+ 48 ♔f2.

47 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 48 f6 ♘h6 49 ♕g5 ♖f7 50 ♕xh6

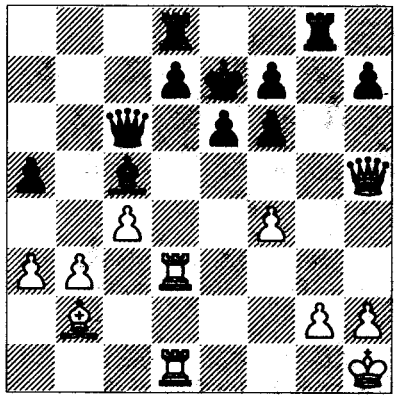
The temporary sacrifice has paid off owing to the black king's weakness. White has a pawn surplus and continuing pressure. However, very typically, the weaker side seizes the initiative in compensation and White must stay alert to beat it back. Ftačnik does so nicely...

50...♕e8 51 ♔f1! ♕e3

After 51...♗xg2+ 52 ♖xg2 ♕e3 53 ♖g7 the white king will run out of checks.

52 ♗xa8 ♕xd2 53 ♗d5

A new material transformation has taken place, generating a new initiative, and this time it is decisive: in answer to checks, the king will run to safety to f5 and then e6, when simple technique will suffice. The piece sacrifice, which brought quick returns at practically no risk, was essentially a pseudo-sacrifice. The same can be said of the following cases.



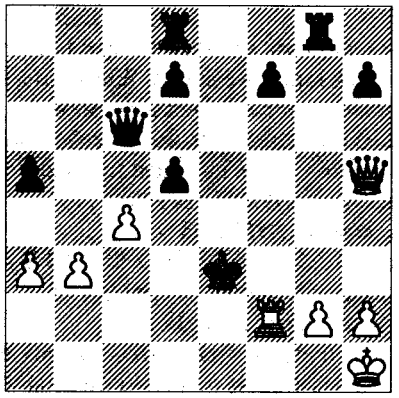
Kotov – Sorokin
Leningrad 1936

Sorokin has just brought his queen to c6 in an ambitious attempt to seize the initiative by increasing the pressure on the g2-pawn. Planning optimistically, he missed a spectacular refutation...

30 ♗xf6+! ♔xf6 31 ♕h4+ ♔f5 32 ♖d5+! exd5 33 ♕h5+ ♔xf4 34 ♖f1+ ♗f2 35 ♖xf2+ ♔e3 *(D)*

Mating threats forced the king out of its refuge on e7 and the counter-sacrifice was Black's last chance to escape. And fortunately for him, White replied incorrectly:

W



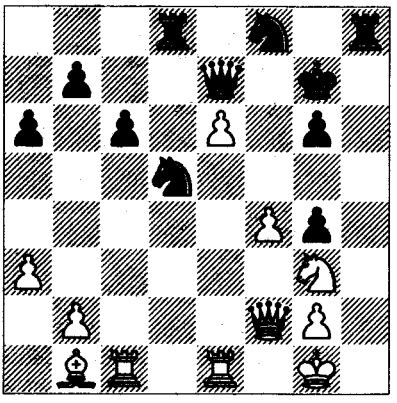
36 ♕e2+?

36 ♕h4! keeps the king in the mating-net.

36...♔d4 37 ♖f4+ ♔c5 38 ♕e3+ ♔d6 39 ♖f6+ ♔c7 40 ♖xc6+ dxc6

White wins the queen but only draws the game.

W



Capablanca – Kan
Moscow 1935

It is clear at first sight that the king's position on g7 is vulnerable and the following sacrifice does not surprise us.

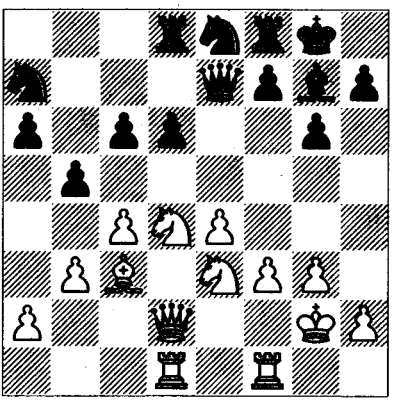
34 ♗xg6! ♔xg6 35 ♕c2+ ♔f6 36 ♕f5+ ♔g7 37 ♕xg4+ ♔h7 38 ♔f2

38 ♖e5!, denying the defence on the seventh rank, would have finished more quickly, but the text-move was good enough to simplify into a winning ending.

38...♕g7 39 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 40 e7 ♖e8 41 exf8♕+ ♖exf8 42 f5 ♖h4 43 ♖cd1 ♖f4+ 44 ♔g1 ♖g4 45 ♖d3 ♔f7 46 ♔f2 ♖h8 47 ♖b3 b6 48 ♘e4 ♖h6 49 g3

White's somewhat clumsy array on the kingside has achieved harmony and started to move forward in orderly fashion. Black could not resist long.

W



Kotov – Barcza
Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952

What strikes the eye first is the clumsy position of Black's knights, inappropriate for a King's Indian Defence. Then immediately a geometrical motif attracts us...

21 ♘df5! gxf5 22 ♘xf5 ♕c7

Black would prefer to keep the queen closer to the endangered king, but 22...♕e6 is answered by 23 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 24 ♕g5 ♕e5 25 ♘h6+ ♔h8 26 ♕xe5 dxe5 27 ♖xd8, etc. The text-move makes it possible to parry that threat on the seventh rank, but White strikes in a different way...

23 ♘xg7 ♘xg7 24 ♗f6!

The f-pawn is blocked, keeping the black king separated from its defensive forces.

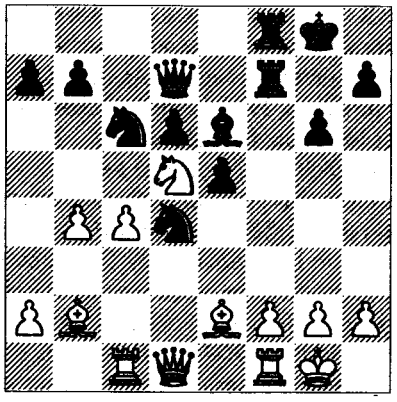
24...♔h8

24...♘e6 is obviously inadequate due to 25 f4 ♖fe8 26 f5 ♖d7 27 ♖f4, so Black is forced down the main line.

25 ♕g5 ♖g8 26 h4 ♖de8 27 h5 ♖e5 28 ♗xe5 dxe5 29 ♕f6

There is no defence against h6.

W



Furman – Spassky
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1957

19 ♗d3?!

This exposes the king's position more than it appears.

19...♗g4 20 f3

20 ♕d2 is met by 20...♗f3; e.g., 21 ♕g5? h6.

20...♗xf3! 21 gxf3 ♘xf3+ 22 ♔h1

Further simplifications with 22 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 do not help. For example, 23 ♗e2 ♖f2 24 ♕e1 ♕f5 or 23 ♖c2 ♕h3!.

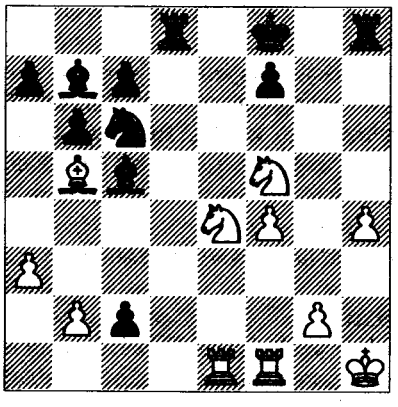
22...♕h3 23 ♖f2?

23 ♖c2? loses to 23...♘xh2, but 23 ♕e2 is essential, when 23...♘xh2 is best (not 23...e4? 24 ♗xe4 ♘xh2 25 ♘f6+! ♖xf6 26 ♗d5+).

23...♘e1!! 0-1

This beautiful, devastating move forces immediate surrender.

B



Glek – Volkov
Santo Domingo 2002

Black's pair of bishops, better-posted rooks and above all the menacing passed pawn at c2 as well as the uneasy white king in the corner help us to notice the motif Volkov used for the winning piece sacrifice:

21...♘d4! 22 ♘xc5 ♘xf5 23 ♘xb7

Black has sacrificed a whole piece, but White's extra piece is trapped and of little value in the struggle ahead. Exchanges accentuate the vulnerability of the white king and the value of the passed pawn.

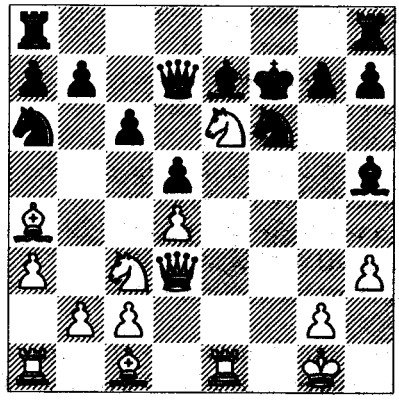
23...♖xh4+ 24 ♔g1 ♖d2

Black threatens 25...♘g3, with the deadly threat of 26...♖h1#.

25 ♖f2 ♖d1 26 ♖xc2 ♖xe1+ 27 ♔f2 ♖e4 28 ♗e2 ♘d4

White's defences have been totally broken down.

W



Krasenkow – Kindermann
Panormo ECC 2001

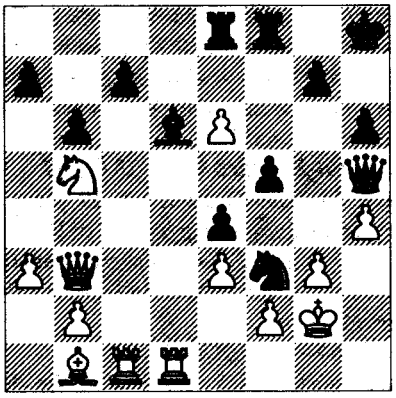
By 17...♔e8-f7 Black defended the g7-pawn and seemed to be moving towards safety by 'castling by hand'. However, he has jumped from the frying pan into the fire...

18 ♘xd5!

Hidden and nice. The pin prevents 18...cxd5 and as a consequence the a2-g8 diagonal is opened. f7 was not a fortunate square for the king. Given that 18...♗g6 fails to the reply 19 ♘xf6 ♕xe6 20 ♘e4 and 18...♕xd5 19 ♗b3 can hardly be considered, there is no real alternative to...

18...♘xd5 19 ♕f5+ ♘f6 20 ♗b3 ♗g6 21 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 22 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♗h6 1-0

B



C. Bauer – Bologan
Enghien les Bains 2001

The solitary king cut off from its army suggests the worst – and the worst comes at once:

26...♗xg3! 27 fxg3 ♘xh4+ 28 gxh4 ♕f3+ 29 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 30 ♔h1

If 30 ♔h3, then 30...g5.

30...♕xh4+ 31 ♔g1

31 ♔g2 is met by 31...♖f6.

31...♕g3+ 32 ♔f1 f4

The point: opening the f-file gives the queen the necessary helping-hand.

33 ♗xe4 fxe3+ 34 ♔e2 ♖f2+ 35 ♔d3 e2+ 36 ♔c4 exd1♕ 37 ♕xd1 ♕e5

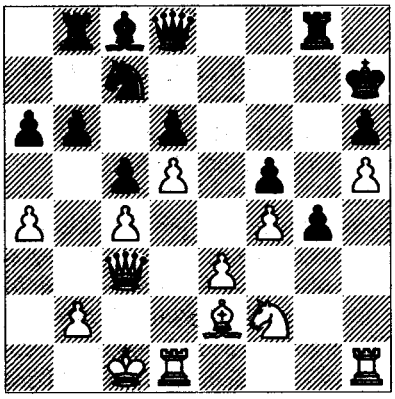
Regaining the material with interest.

38 ♘c3

38 ♕d5 is no better due to 38...♖xe6.

38...♖xb2 39 ♕d7 b5+ 40 ♔d3 ♕g3+ 0-1

W



Ordonez – Vescovi
Merida 2000

28...♖e8-g8 was meant to prevent ♘xg4 and considering that 29 e4 can be met by 29...g3, the king felt secure at h7. At the same time Black threatens 29...b5 and he seems to have reasons to be satisfied. However...

29 e4! g3 30 ♗d3! gxf2 31 exf5

The piece was given up for a good cause: cut off from the main force of his army, the king is imperilled in his corner. Only the humble f2-pawn, controlling the vital squares e1 and g1, offers some solace. However, after 31...b5? 32 f6+ ♔h8 33 f7+ ♖g7 34 ♖hg1! it proves of little help.

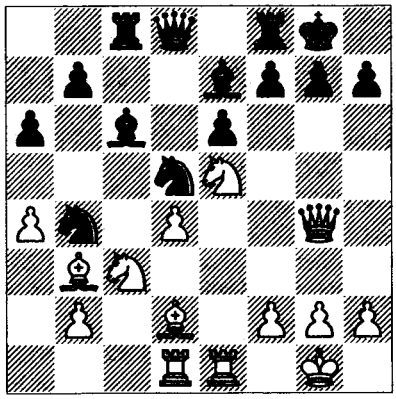
31...♖g3?

31...♕f8 and 31...♗d7 are more resilient.

32 f6+ ♔g8 33 f7+ ♔xf7 34 ♗g6+ ♖xg6 35 hxg6+ ♔xg6 36 ♖dg1+ fxg1♕+ 37 ♖xg1+

The lonely king is helpless.

B



Lautier – Bologan
French Cht 2001

White has just played the aggressive move 18 ♕e2-g4. Feeling uneasy on the kingside, Black was reluctant to weaken his pawn-formation by 18...f5 or lose a tempo by 18...♔h8, and played...

18...♘f6

However, he had forgotten about an old motif:

19 ♘xf7!

Black is weak on the a2-g8 diagonal, which makes the sacrificial line a one-way street.

19...♖xf7

19...♘xg4 loses to 20 ♘xd8 ♖cxd8 21 ♖xe6, etc.

20 ♕xe6 ♘bd5

The e7-bishop is hanging and the diagonal must be blocked. 20...♘fd5 would provoke the same destructive reply.

21 ♖e5

The pressure on the vital point d5 makes Black's position untenable.

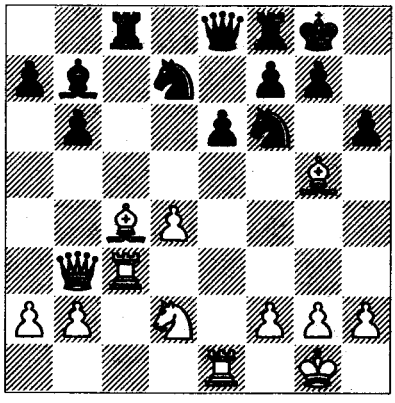
21...♗d7 22 ♖xd5 ♗xe6 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗xe6 ♖xd4 25 ♗g5 ♖xd1+

25...♖b4 is worse due to 26 ♗xf6.

26 ♘xd1 ♔f8 27 ♗xf7 ♔xf7 28 ♔f1

The endgame is an elementary win. The sacrifice turned into a temporary material offer which paid off quickly in the form of a healthy pawn.

W



Onishchuk – Vescovi
Poikovsky 2002

Pushed into passivity, Black was lacking reasonable moves when he dared to play 15...h6. What follows is a classical pseudo-sacrifice which can be calculated practically until the very end.

16 ♗xh6! gxh6 17 ♖h3

Given that the other rook is also ready for the rook-lift on the third rank and that the f7-pawn is paralysed by the pressure on e6, Black's defensive possibilities are not impressive.

17...♖xc4

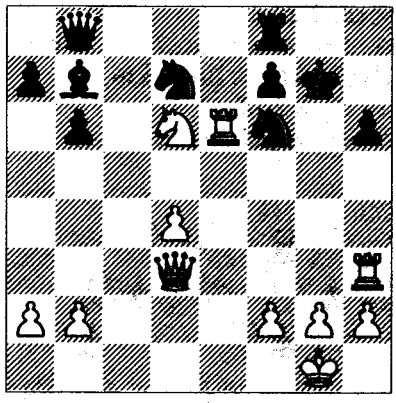
17...♘g4 loses to 18 ♕g3 ♘f6 19 ♖xh6 ♔g7 20 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 21 ♕h4+.

18 ♘xc4 ♔g7

18...♕b8 would prevent 19 ♕g3+, but in that case 19 ♕e3 ♘g4 20 ♖g3 decides. To no avail is 18...h5 19 ♕g3+ ♔h7 20 ♕g5 ♖g8 (or 20...♕d8 21 ♘d6) because of 21 ♖xh5+ ♘xh5 22 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 23 ♘d6.

19 ♕g3+ ♔h7 20 ♕d3+ ♔g7 21 ♘d6 ♕b8 22 ♖xe6! *(D)*

B

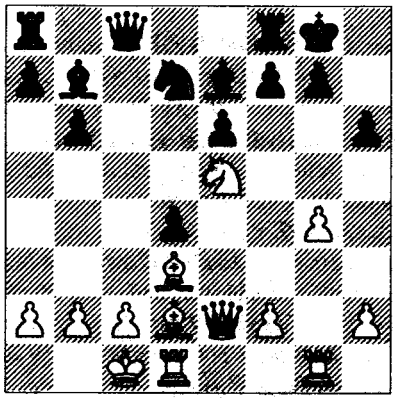


The *coup de grâce* is planned for f5 or g6.

22...fxe6 23 ♖g3+ ♘g4 24 ♖xg4+ ♔f6 25 ♕h7 1-0

There's nowhere to flee.

W



Iordachescu – Van Wely
Romanian Cht 2000

Defending against the kingside onslaught, Black pinned his hopes on 15...♘f6-d7, but had to face a violent attack on his king:

16 g5! ♘xe5 17 gxh6!

Exposed to superior forces, the king's position is shattered by the simplest of tactical means – opening the critical g-file at the cost of a piece which is not so valuable under the circumstances.

17...♘xd3+

17...♗f6 fails to 18 hxg7, and 17...♘g6 to 18 ♗xg6 fxg6 19 ♖xg6 ♗f6 20 ♖dg1 ♖f7 21 hxg7, when the h-file becomes the route of the decisive invasion.

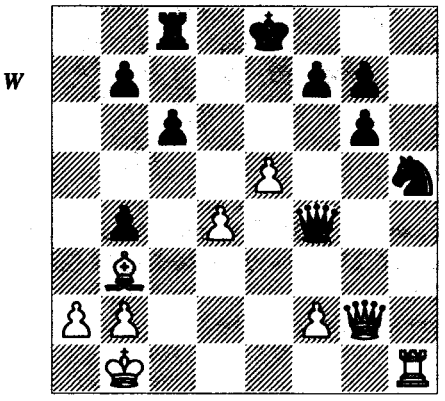
18 ♕xd3 ♖d8

If 18...♗f6, then 19 hxg7 ♖d8 20 ♕h3.

19 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 20 ♖dg1 ♗f6

Or 20...♔e8 21 ♖xf7.

21 ♗b4+ ♔e8 22 ♖xf7 1-0



Petrosian – Ivkov
Hamburg Echt 1965

Closing the h-file has given Black only a temporary relief. The very next move raises the tension again...

25 ♗c2! ♔e7

Black parries 26 e6, but is struck at another sore point. 25...♕xd4 is as bad; after 26 e6 ♘f4 27 exf7+ ♔xf7 28 ♕g4 White threatens ♗xg6+, while 28...♖d8 does not work due to 29 ♖d1.

26 ♗xg6! fxg6 27 ♕xg6

What he gives, he takes back, but with good interest.

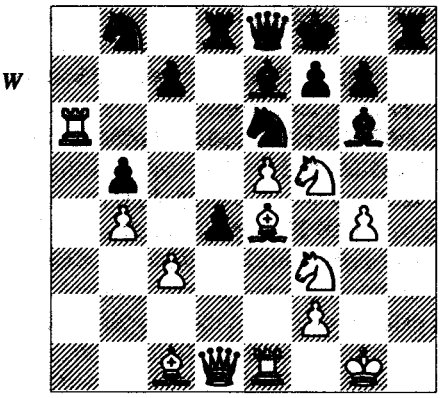
27...♕xd4

The exposed position of the king at e7 does not allow 27...♖h8, when 28 ♕d6+ decides.

28 ♕xh5 ♕d3+ 29 ♔a1 ♖d8 30 ♖g1 ♖d7 31 ♖xg7+ ♔d8 32 ♖g1

Black's case is beyond hope.

Obviously a minor-piece sacrifice is a common and strong attacking weapon. Statistics demonstrate that a professional player carrying out an attack is more reluctant to offer a rook, but the less risky version – an exchange sacrifice – is also frequent.



Hjartarson – Korchnoi
St John Ct (1) 1988

Korchnoi, on the defensive, has just sought counterplay by a central pawn thrust. Hjartarson's response is most energetic:

24 ♖xe6! fxe6 25 ♘xe7 ♗xe4 26 ♖xe4 dxc3 27 ♘g6+ ♔g8 28 ♖d4 ♖xd4 29 ♕xd4

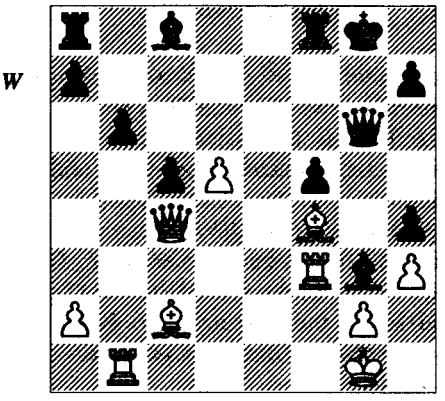
The series of captures finally comes to a halt.

29...♖h3

29...♕xg6 fails to 30 ♕d8+ ♔h7 31 ♘g5+.

30 ♘g5 ♖h6 31 ♘f4 ♘c6 32 ♕xc3

Black is lost.



Dreev – Peng Xiaomin
Beijing 2000

Unaware of the danger, instead of the indispensable 24...♗xf4 Black has just played

24...b6. White now struck with an exchange sacrifice:

25 ♖xg3! hxg3 26 ♖b3

The target is obviously the king itself. It is exposed on the dark squares and will have to leave its corner – out of the frying pan and into the fire.

26...♕f6 27 ♖xg3+ ♔f7 28 ♕e2

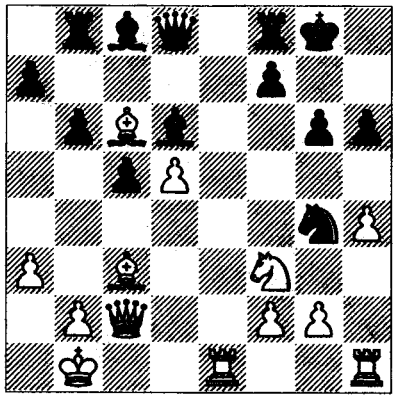
White threatens 29 ♕h5+ and 29 ♗e5.

28...♕h4

To parry both threats simultaneously, Black can try only 28...♕d4+ 29 ♗e3 ♕h4, but 30 ♕f3 sets up new threats which cannot be met: 30...♔e8 loses to 31 d6, while 30...♖g8 is refuted by 31 ♗xf5 ♖xg3 32 ♗e6++ ♔e8 33 ♕f7+ ♔d8 34 ♗f4 ♕e7 35 ♗c7+, etc.

29 ♕e5! 1-0

The sacrifice has paid off nicely. 29...♕f6 30 ♕c7+ and 29...♖g8 30 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 31 ♕e8+ ♔g7 32 ♗e5+ both lead to mate.



Dreev – Tiviakov
Dos Hermanas 2003

Here again, it is the loose position of the black king which makes a crushing sacrifice possible:

20 ♖e6! ♗xe6 21 dxe6 f5

Placing the d5-square under surveillance by 21...♘f6 does not help because of 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 (or 22...♔g7 23 h5 gxh5 24 ♘h4) 23 ♘g5+.

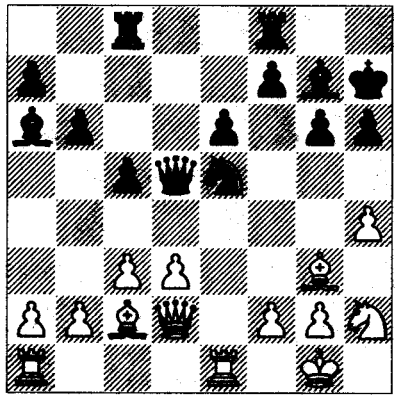
22 h5

This will seriously damage Black's pawn-structure, opening the way for White's attacking pieces.

22...gxh5

Dreev demonstrated that 22...g5 does not work due to 23 e7! ♗xe7 24 ♖d1 ♕c7 25 ♕b3+ ♖f7 26 ♕e6 ♖d8 27 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 28 ♗d5 ♕e8 29 ♘e5 ♘xe5 30 ♕xe5.

23 ♖xh5 ♕e7 24 ♘h4 ♕xe6 25 ♘xf5 ♗e5 26 ♗d5 1-0



Benjamin – Browne
Philadelphia 2000

Geometrical motifs convincingly support the following temporary material sacrifice:

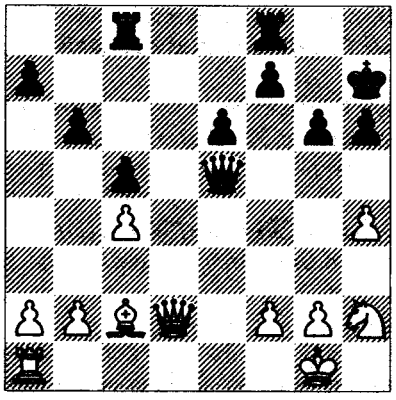
20 ♖xe5! ♗xe5 21 c4!

The hidden point of the combination.

21...♗xc4

21...♕d6 does not work due to 22 ♘g4 f6 23 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 24 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 25 d4.

22 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 23 dxc4 *(D)*



White threatens 24 ♕xh6+, and the b2-pawn is taboo.

23...♕d4

23...♕g7 24 h5 is not appealing for Black either, so he sought sanctuary in an endgame.

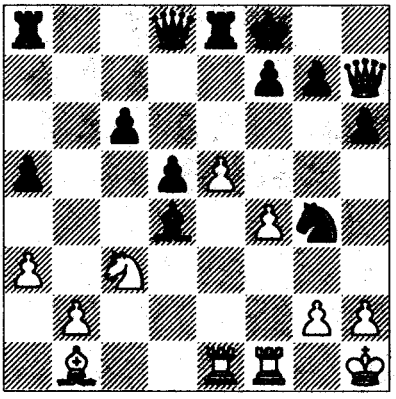
24 ♕xd4 cxd4 25 ♗d3 ♔g7

The immediate 25...e5 fails to 26 ♘g4.

26 f4

Black has a lost position.

W



Marshall – Bogoljubow
New York 1924

When the white queen penetrated along the diagonal, Black was still hopeful in expectation of 26 ♕h8+ ♔e7 27 ♕xg7, after which 27...♖g8 28 ♕h7 ♔f8 avoids the worst and Black can seek counter-chances. However, White was careful...

26 g3! ♕b6 27 ♗f5!

Having prevented ...♕h4, it's time to expel the knight from its defensive position. It costs an exchange, but it gains much more.

27...♘f2+ 28 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 29 ♕h8+ ♔e7 30 ♕xg7

White threatens mate by 31 ♕f6+ ♔f8 32 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 (or 32...♔e7 33 ♕d6#) 33 ♗h7+ ♔h8 34 ♗g6+, etc., and this earns a crucial tempo.

30...♔d8 31 ♕f6+ ♖e7 32 e6! *(D)*

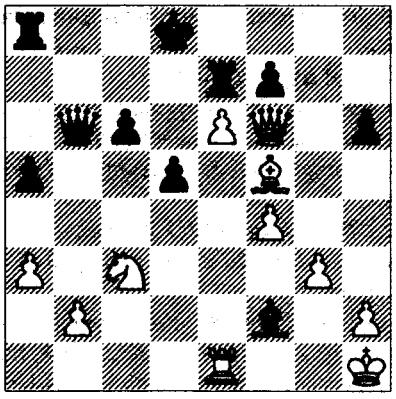
The great tactician has found the way to the enemy king.

32...♗d4

Neither 32...fxe6 33 ♖xe6 nor 32...♗xe1 33 exf7 works, while 32...♕d4 does not help due to 33 ♖e5.

33 exf7 ♗xf6 34 f8♕+ ♔c7 35 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 36 ♕xa8 ♔d6

B

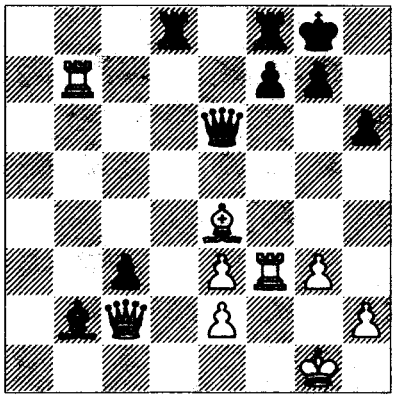


White had calculated correctly that 36...♕f2 loses the queen to 37 ♕c8+ ♔b6 (or 37...♔d6) 38 ♕b8+, etc.

37 ♕h8

The position is hopeless for Black.

W



Taimanov – Spassky
Rostov-on-Don 1971

In order to close the d-file, White now continued:

31 ♗d3

White can insert a check on h7, but this does not change matters: 31 ♗h7+ ♔h8 32 ♗d3 ♖xd3 33 ♕xd3 and now Black must avoid 33...♕c6? 34 ♖bxf7, but 33...♕c8, guarding the back rank, is sufficient to win.

There now came a most unpleasant surprise for White:

31...♖xd3! 32 exd3

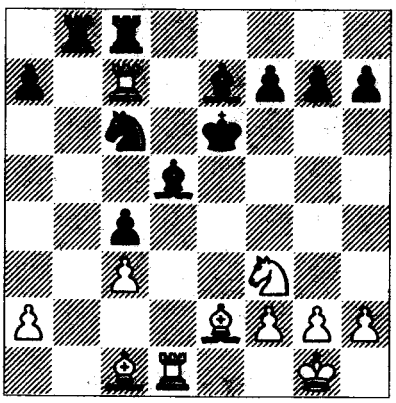
32 ♕xd3 does not work because of 32...♕c6, while 32 ♖xb2 fails to 32...♖d1+ 33 ♕xd1

cxb2 34 ♕c2 (alternatively, 34 ♕b1 ♕b6) 34...♖b8.

32...♕d5 33 ♖xb2 cxb2 34 ♖f1 ♕e5 35 e4 ♖a8 36 ♕b3

Just a blank shot.

36...♖a1 37 ♔g2 ♖c1 38 ♕xf7+ ♔h7 39 ♖f5 ♕d6 40 e5 ♕g6 0-1



Shirov – Bacrot
Reykjavik 2003

Taking on c6 comes to mind as soon as it dawns upon us that retaking with the bishop is not attractive due to 20 ♗xc4+. However, it takes some imagination to see the whole of White's idea. To Shirov it probably came naturally.

19 ♖xc6+! ♖xc6 20 ♘d4+ ♔d7 21 ♘f5!

This finesse is the point behind Shirov's combination, and there are still some subtle tactical ideas ahead.

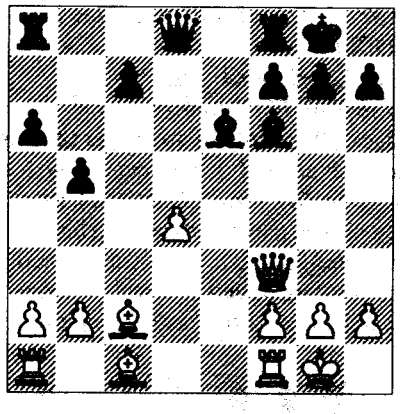
21...♖b1

Black now succumbs prosaically. 21...♖b5 challenges White to show his cards, when the easy-going 22 a4? ♖a5 23 ♘e3 ♖d6 24 ♗a3 contains a hole – Black strikes back by the beautiful 24...♗f3!!. The mistake lies in the 'natural' 22 a4, instead of which 22 ♘e3 ♖d6 23 ♗a3 is stronger, because of 23...♗f3 24 ♗xf3 ♖xd1+ 25 ♗xd1 ♗xa3 26 ♗a4 a6 27 ♘xc4 with a clear advantage.

22 ♘xe7 ♖xc1 23 ♘xd5

White went on to win.

The previous position was very characteristic of a pseudo-sacrifice, but the following example differs slightly.



Topalov – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 2001

16 ♗e4

This move appears to seize the initiative, but Black responds resolutely with an exchange sacrifice.

16...♗xd4! 17 ♖d1

Grabbing the exchange at once by 17 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 would favour Black.

17...c5!

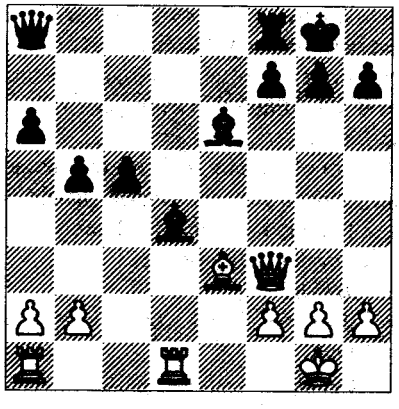
Given that 17...♖b8 cedes the initiative to White, Black insists on his offer.

18 ♗xa8

Now 18 ♗e3 could be met by 18...♖a7.

18...♕xa8 19 ♗e3 *(D)*

The only move. 19 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 would leave White's further development in question, and he is compelled to accept the damage to his pawn-structure.



19...♕xf3 20 gxf3 ♗xb2 21 ♗xc5 ♖c8 22 ♖ab1 h6

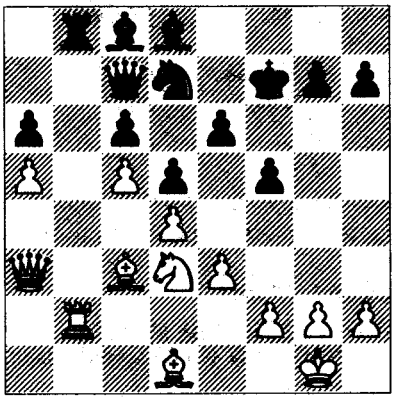
On 22...♗f6 23 ♗d4 ♗xa2 there is 24 ♖a1 ♗b3 25 ♖dc1.

23 ♗b4 ♗e5 24 a3

The tension has diminished, and it is clear that Black is certainly in no danger of losing.

Black obtained full compensation for the exchange in the form of an extra pawn and White's broken pawn-formation. This is a typical positional sacrifice, but it was offered at no risk, so we cannot call it a real sacrifice. The same can be said of our next examples.

W



Steinitz – Chigorin
Havana Wch (20) 1892

26 ♖b6!

One of those positional decisions we take easily. If the knight takes on b6, the far-advanced passed pawn will sit on b6 waiting for the proper moment to move forward. At the same time the dark squares c5 and e5 will be in complete control of the white minor pieces. A very typical exchange sacrifice. By its nature it's a positional sacrifice, but under the circumstances it's definitely a pseudo-sacrifice.

26...♘xb6?!

It is psychologically difficult to tolerate this rook on b6, but a very disciplined, patient player would not capture it, because Black's situation now deteriorates dramatically.

27 cxb6 ♕b7

The only move; Black cannot afford to lose the c6-pawn.

28 ♘e5+ ♔g8

Again forced. 28...♔e8 loses more quickly: 29 ♗h5+ g6 30 ♘xg6 hxg6 31 ♗xg6+ ♔d7 32 ♕f8.

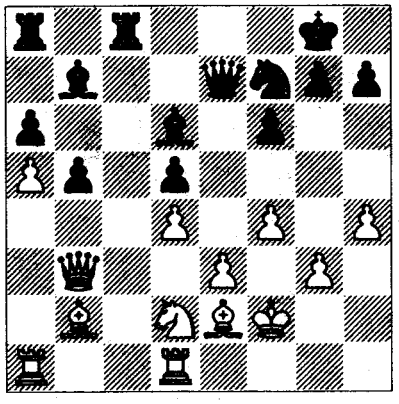
29 ♗a4 ♕e7

29...♗e7 30 ♗b4 ♗xb4 31 ♕xb4 changes little.

30 ♗b4 ♕f6 31 ♕c3 h6 32 ♗d6

Black could have resigned at once.

B



Spassky – Petrosian
Moscow Wch (11) 1969

White's kingside pawn-structure feels porous. The light squares have been lastingly weakened and it's easy to imagine what would happen if the diagonal of the black queen's bishop were opened. The next move is based on this motif.

30...♖c4!

Similar arguments stand behind this exchange sacrifice as behind that in the previous game; they are strong enough to persuade White not to accept it, at least not now.

31 ♕d3 ♖e8 32 ♗f3 ♗b4

The knight needs the d6-square.

33 ♗a3 ♗xa3 34 ♖xa3 ♘d6 35 ♖e1 f5 36 ♖aa1

The manoeuvre ♘b3-c5 seems White's only answer to 36...♖ec8. In view of that, Petrosian's continuation is understandable.

36...♘e4+ 37 ♗xe4 fxe4 38 ♕b1 ♕d7

After the central exchange a new breach has been opened in the defensive wall. From now on, the queen's inroad on g4 or h3 will constantly hang over White's head.

39 ♖a2 ♖ec8 40 ♘xc4

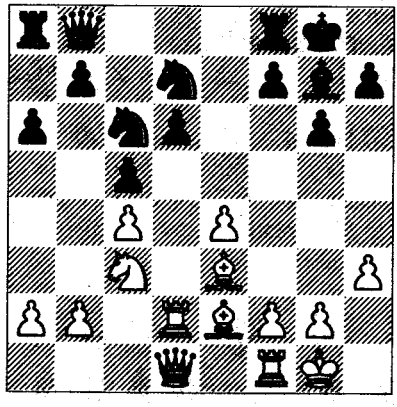
Spassky demonstrated maximum restraint in a positionally impossible situation, but reluctantly he finally had to capture the rook. 40

♘b3 comes late; for example, 40...♕h3 41 ♖g1 (41 ♖h1 loses to 41...♖c2+) 41...♖c3 and now 42 ♖d2 ♕g4 or 42 ♘c5 ♖8xc5 43 dxc5 d4.

40...dxc4 41 d5 ♗xd5 42 ♖d1 c3 43 ♖c2 ♕h3 44 ♖g1 ♕g4 45 ♔g2 ♕f3+ 46 ♔h2 ♕xe3

White is lost.

B



Andersson – Vaganian
Skellefteå 1989

To protect the backward pawn Black closed the file with...

16...♘d4

There followed a textbook example of an exchange sacrifice.

17 ♗xd4! cxd4 18 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 19 ♕xd4

In addition to the pawn he has gained for the exchange, White has achieved a huge spatial advantage, with continuing pressure on the backward d6-pawn as well as direct threats on the dark diagonal.

19...♕a7

Fearing the king's weakness, Black decides to give up another pawn, which seems reasonable under the circumstances. Black could defend the pawn with 19...♘e5 20 ♖d1 ♖d8, but 21 f4 ♘c6 22 ♕f6 spells disaster.

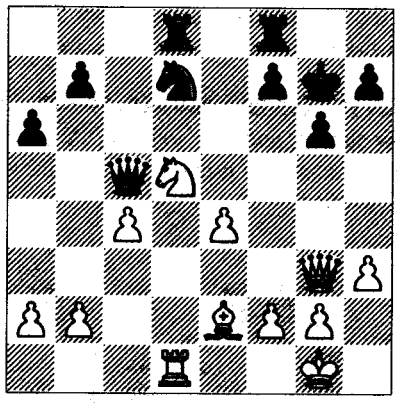
20 ♕xd6 ♖ad8 21 ♘d5 ♔g7?!

The immediate 21...♕c5 is better, as the d4-square is not under surveillance as yet. A move later it will not be available to the black queen and the exchange will be avoided, to Black's detriment.

22 ♖d1 ♕c5 23 ♕g3! *(D)*

Taking into consideration the weak a1-h8 diagonal, the queen has not finished its job as yet.

B



23...a5 24 ♕c3+ f6

After 24...♔g8, 25 ♗g4 provokes a new weakening of the black king's position.

25 ♘f4 ♕e7

Or 25...♖fe8 26 ♗g4.

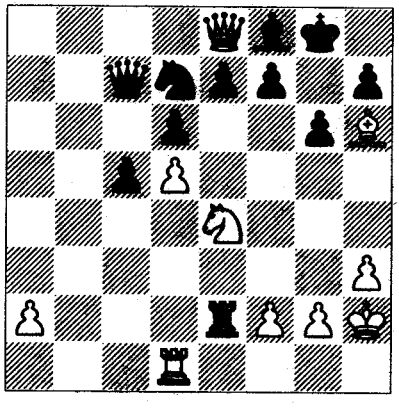
26 ♕xa5 ♕xe4 27 ♖d4 ♕e7 28 ♕c7 ♔h8 29 ♗f1 ♕e5 30 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 31 ♕xd7 ♕xf4 32 ♕xb7 ♖b8 33 ♕f7

Passing into an endgame would certainly please Andersson in most positions, let alone in a position of this kind. The rest of the game was a rather simple technical matter:

33...♕d6 34 c5 ♕f8 35 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 36 b4 ♖a8 37 b5 ♖xa2 38 ♗c4 ♖a1+ 39 ♔h2 ♔g7 40 c6 ♔h8 1-0

As we go higher on the scale of values, sacrifices become rarer. Giving up a whole rook is not an everyday experience. When it happens, there is a strong reason behind it.

W



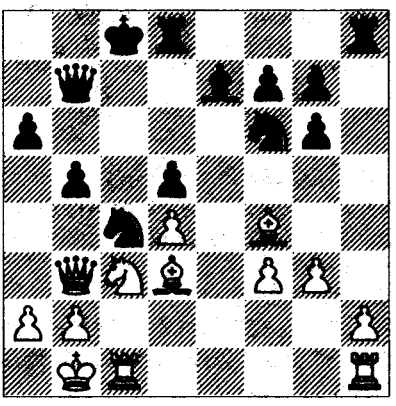
Shulman – Friedel
Connecticut 2003

27 ♘g5 would be answered by 27...♖xf2, but an ingenious rook offer takes care of that detail:

27 ♖e1! ♖xa2 28 ♘f6+ exf6 29 ♖e7 1-0

How simple, and how logical! "A good part of chess beauty is related to simplicity and logic" (Larsen).

W



Korchnoi – Gretarsson
Reykjavik 2003

There follows a shattering blow based on the exposed position of the black king:

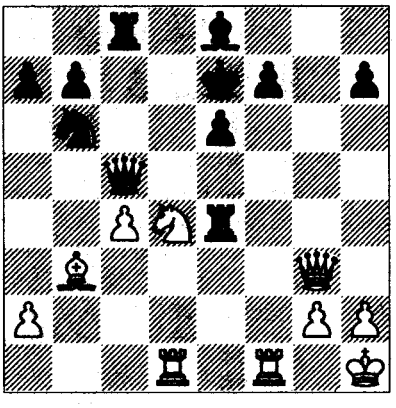
20 ♘xd5! ♕xd5

Otherwise 21 ♗xc4 would follow.

21 ♖xc4+! bxc4 22 ♗xc4 ♕b7 23 ♗e6+ 1-0

Or in a more complex but again calculable version:

W



Kotov – Yudovich
Leningrad 1939

The question is obviously how to reach the vulnerable king at e7. Kotov finds a striking answer:

25 ♖f5!!

An offer Black can't refuse.

25...exf5

On 25...♕d6 White had in mind the crushing 26 ♖xf7+! ♗xf7 27 ♘f5+, while one is unwilling even to contemplate 25...♕c7 26 ♕g5+.

26 ♘xf5+ ♔f6 27 ♖d6+ ♔xf5

If 27...♖e6, then 28 ♕g7+ ♔xf5 29 ♗c2+, etc.

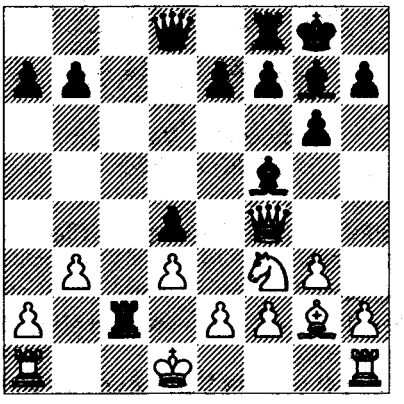
28 ♕f3+ ♖f4

Or 28...♔g5 29 ♕f6+ ♔h5 30 ♗d1+.

29 ♕h5+ ♔e4 30 ♗c2+ ♔e3 31 ♖d3+ 1-0

All in one breath! Kotov was also up to the task in the next game.

B



Rudakov – Kotov
Tula 1929

This time it was again a whole rook in question!

1...♕a5! 2 ♔xc2 ♕c3+ 3 ♔b1 ♗xd3+!

It is essential to open the diagonal of the fianchettoed bishop. The rest is easy.

4 exd3 ♕xd3+ 5 ♔b2 ♕c3+ 6 ♔a3 ♕c5+ 7 b4

After 7 ♔a4 a5 Black forces a quick mate: 8 a3 b5+ 9 ♔xa5 ♖a8#.

7...♕c3+ 8 ♔a4 b5+ 9 ♔xb5

Or 9 ♔a5 ♕c6.

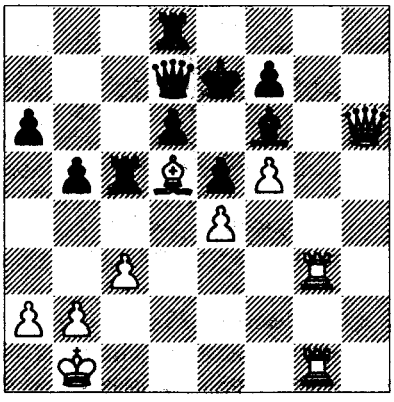
9...e5 10 ♕c1 ♖b8+ 11 ♔a6 ♕xb4

Mate cannot be parried.

Giving up a rook in the above examples did not involve risk; all the combinations could be calculated until the end. However, chances to

offer a whole rook remain exceptional. The same could be said of the queen sacrifice. As a rule, by its nature it belongs mostly to pseudo-sacrifices for obvious reasons. That there are, as we shall see, real queen sacrifices does not change this fact.

W

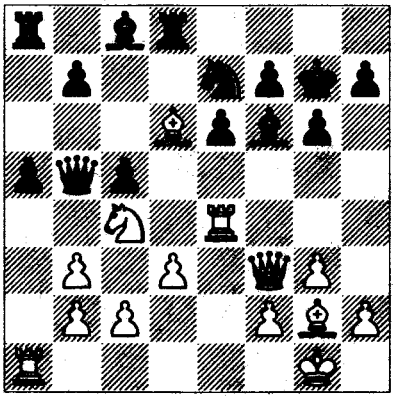


Lutz – Ftačnik
Bundesliga 2000/1

This is one of many games supporting the view that opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side. The end is simple, but symbolic:

31 ♕xf6+! ♔xf6 32 ♖g6+ fxg6 33 ♖xg6+ ♔e7 34 f6+ 1-0

W



Petrosian – Pachman
Bled 1961

This is more complicated, but still a typical pseudo-sacrifice of the queen.

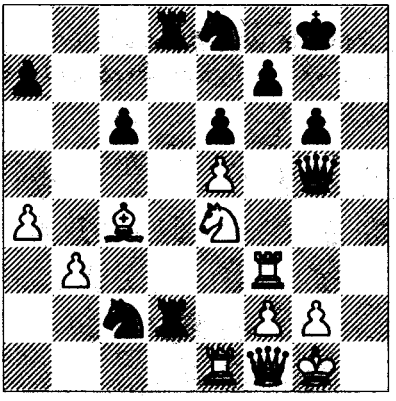
19 ♕xf6+! ♔xf6 20 ♗e5+ ♔g5

Including 20...♔f5 21 ♘e3+ changes nothing.

21 ♗g7!! 1-0

The king is caught in the net and there is no defence against 22 h4+.

B



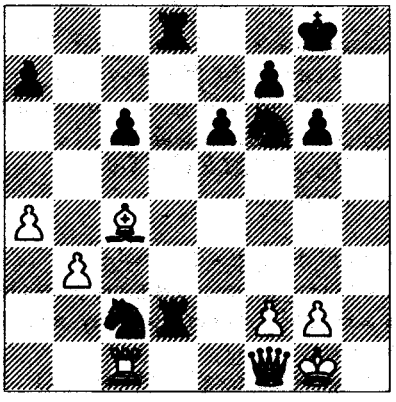
Euwe – Lasker
Zurich 1934

White had been relying on his last move, 35 ♘g3-e4 to meet Black's incursion into his territory. The e5-pawn is apparently taboo, while after 35...♘xe1 36 ♘xg5 ♘xf3+ 37 ♘xf3 ♖d1, 38 ♘e1 protects the first rank. However, there was more to it...

35...♕xe5! 36 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 37 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 38 ♖c1?! *(D)*

Objectively, simplifying into an endgame by 38 ♖e2 ♖d1 39 ♖xc2 ♖xf1+ 40 ♔xf1 is White's best try, but when the queen is in question, psychological reasons usually prevail over objective ones.

B



38...♘e4 39 ♗e2 ♘d4 40 ♗f3 ♘xf2 41 ♕c4 ♘d3 42 ♖f1 ♘e5

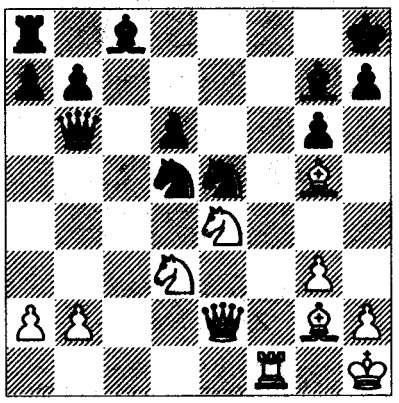
The knights are dominant.

43 ♕b4 ♘exf3+ 44 gxf3 ♘e2+ 45 ♔h2

45 ♔f2 loses to 45...♘f4+: 46 ♕xd2 ♖xd2+ 47 ♔e3 ♖b2, etc.; 46 ♔e3 ♘g2+ 47 ♔e4 ♖e2#; 46 ♔g3 e5; or 46 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 47 ♔h1 e5 48 ♕e7 ♖d5.

45...♘f4+ 46 ♔h1 ♖2d4 47 ♕e7 ♔g7 48 ♕c7 ♖8d5 49 ♖e1 ♖g5 50 ♕xc6 ♖d8 0-1

W



Tregubov – Lalić
Saint Vincent 2000

It is obviously Black's backward development that prompts further events.

20 ♘xd6!

An unexpected introduction to the queen sacrifice.

20...♗g4

20...♕xd6 is not an option because of 21 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♖f8+ ♔g7 (22...♕xf8 loses to 23 ♕xe5+ ♕g7 24 ♕e8+ ♕g8 25 ♗xd5) 23 ♖d8.

21 ♘xe5 ♗xe2 22 ♘ef7+ ♔g8 23 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 24 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♘f7+ ♔g7

On 25...♔g8 all goes again with checks and music towards the same end.

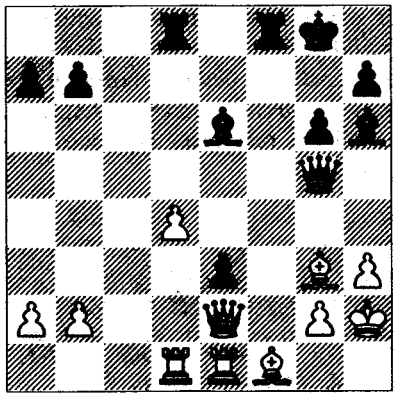
26 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 27 ♘d8+ 1-0

It is mate next move.

In the following position, which arose deep in the middlegame, an opportunity presented itself as a reward for energetic play, and Black did not miss it:

33...♕xg3+! 34 ♔xg3 ♗f4+ 35 ♔f3

B



Apicella – Lautier
Clichy 2001

It is quite clear that 35 ♔h4 g5+ 36 ♔h5 ♗f7+ 37 ♔g4 h5+ must finish badly for White. It was, therefore, quite an easy decision for Black to sacrifice the queen and then see what to do further.

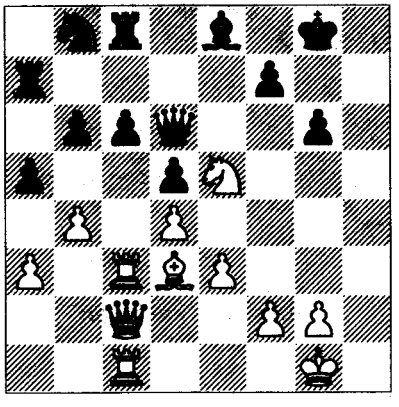
35...♗d5+ 36 ♔g4 ♗e6+ 37 ♔f3 ♗d5+ 38 ♔g4 h5+ 39 ♔h4 ♔g7?

This blunder, possibly caused by time-trouble, lets the king out of its prison. 39...♗f7! 40 ♕b5 ♖d5 wins simply; for example, 41 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 42 g3 ♗c7 43 g4 ♗d8+ 44 g5 ♖f4+ 45 ♔g3 ♗c7, mating.

40 g3 g5+ 41 ♔xh5

and Black had to content himself with a perpetual check. In won positions it is essential to concentrate or else the win might slip away.

W



Kotov – Ragozin
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1949

Saddled by the backward c6-pawn and forced into passive defence, Black was dreaming of some counterplay and when a chance presented itself for 26...a5 it seemed right. 27 b5, believed Black, could be met by 27...c5, given that the e5-knight is hanging. However, his calculation was far from perfect...

27 b5!

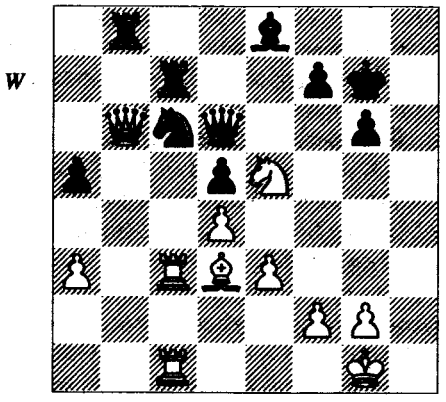
Only now did Black understand that the intended continuation 27...c5? loses to 28 dxc5 ♕xe5 29 cxb6 ♖xc3 30 bxa7!! ♖xc2 31 ♖xc2, when the passed pawn promotes soon. He had to lower his sights.

27...♖ac7 28 bxc6 ♔g7

28...♘xc6 does not work due to 29 ♗b5.

29 ♕b1! ♘xc6 30 ♕xb6 ♖b8 *(D)*

When entering this line, White was aware that 31 ♕c5 ♕xc5 32 ♖xc5 can be met by 32...♘xe5, while 31 ♕a6 comes across 31...♖a7 32 ♖xc6 ♖xa6. He planned something much stronger...



31 ♕xb8! ♘xb8 32 ♖xc7

This time the queen sacrifice happened. Apart from adequate material compensation White could rely on the lack of coordination of the enemy pieces.

32...♕xa3?! 33 ♗xg6 ♘c6

A clever trick in time-trouble, but inadequate. Avoiding ♗xg6 was, therefore, preferable to grabbing the a3-pawn.

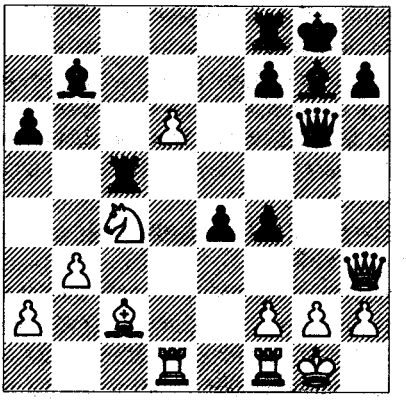
34 ♖1xc6 ♗xc6 35 ♖xf7+

That is the point: the black king is in a mating-net.

35...♔h6

After 35...♔h8 36 ♗h7 White also wins quickly.

36 f4 ♕xe3+ 37 ♔h2 ♕xe5 38 fxe5 1-0



Grishchuk – Yakovenko
Moscow 2003

Black's last move was 24...♖c8-c5, and the threat of 25...♖h5 looks quite annoying. However, White continued unperturbed:

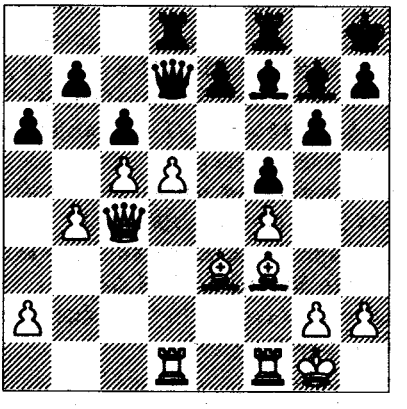
25 d7! ♖h5 26 ♕f3!

If Black hoped for 26 ♕xh5, which favours him, he was rather naive. By placing his queen *en prise*, White starts a forcing sequence.

26...exf3 27 ♗xg6 hxg6 28 d8♕ fxg2 29 ♖fe1 ♖xd8 30 ♖xd8+ ♔h7 31 ♖e7

Suddenly it is White who has a material advantage and realistic chances to win.

Given that an exceptionally valuable piece is at stake, the queen sacrifice is held in awe, which is probably the reason why it is so often missed. If you are in awe of your opponent as well, your chances to miss it increase.



Hraček – Kasparov
Prague simul 2001

Pinned on the g8-a2 diagonal, White decided his best policy was to exchange bishops by 24 ♗d4 and enter a drawn position with just major pieces. It must have been a great disappointment to him when Jan Smejkal demonstrated that he missed a colossal chance to beat his great opponent:

24 dxc6!! ♕xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 26 ♗xd1 ♗xc4 27 cxb7

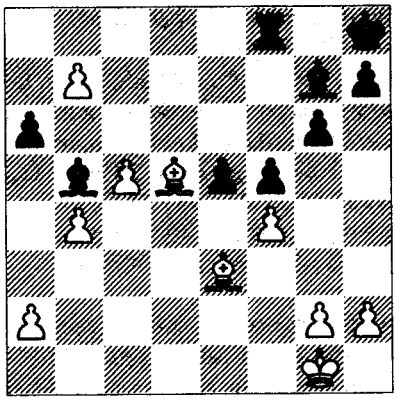
If White considered this continuation at all, he must have overlooked an important detail a step further along than this, because 27...♗d5 28 ♗f3 is quite simple.

27...e5 28 ♗b3!!

27...e5 eliminated the threat of 28 c6, since then 28...♗d5 29 ♗f3? e4 wins, but White can reach the critical diagonal via b3 as well.

28...♗b5 29 ♗d5 *(D)*

B



29...♖e8

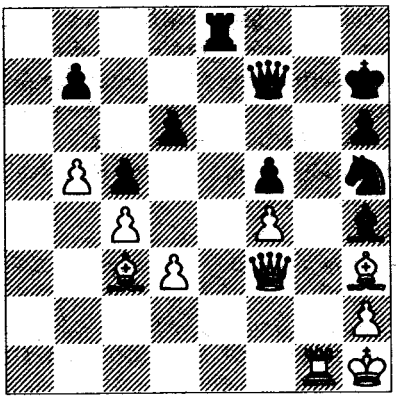
Owing to the bad position of his king in the corner of the board, 29...♗h6 30 c6 ♗xc6 31 ♗xc6 ♗xf4 32 ♗a7 e4 does not succeed due to 33 ♗d4+ ♔g8 34 ♗d5+ ♖f7 winning a piece. 29...g5 30 c6 ♗xc6 31 ♗xc6 exf4 32 ♗c5 ♖b8 33 ♗d6 ♗d4+ 34 ♔f1 ♗a7 does not help either because advancing the pawn to b6 decides. The text-move is a shrewd attempt to meet 30 c6 by 30...exf4 31 c7 fxe3 32 c8♕? ♗d4!!.

30 h3 ♖d8 31 c6 ♗xc6 32 ♗xc6 exf4 33 ♗xf4 ♗d4+ 34 ♔h2 ♗a7 35 ♗c7

Black cannot cope with the bishop-pair and advancing pawn-majority.

I would like you to see a queen sacrifice which stuck in my memory, although it never happened.

B



Larsen – Panno
Palma de Mallorca 1969

Here Black played 43...♖g8, parrying 44 ♕xh5, but after the prosaic 44 ♗xf5+ he had to resign. The obvious defence was 43...♖e7, when Larsen demonstrated a beautiful queen sacrifice: 44 b6! ♖d7 45 ♕g2 ♖d8 46 ♕e2(?) ♖d7(?) 47 ♕e8! – so many pieces, but so few moves at Black's disposal! However, in the interests of accuracy, we must note that in this line 46...♖g8 restricts White to a clear plus (47 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 48 ♕f1 followed by 49 ♗g2), while White can win the move before with 46 ♗xf5+! ♕xf5 47 ♕xb7+ ♖d7 48 ♕c8! ♘g3+ 49 ♖xg3 ♗xg3 50 b7.

We have examined a variety of material sacrifices, from pawn to queen. The combinations were carried out in all phases of the struggle – from opening to endgame. The situations on the board varied as well, from very simple pseudo-sacrifices to more complex borderline cases, and from positional to tactical. However, looking back at the illustrative series of games, we notice that they share some essential characteristics.

The metamorphosis in a pseudo-sacrifice is sudden, quick and radical. It happens in a short time, but it changes the initial position fundamentally; many a time it's like a hurricane hitting the board, strewing pieces around or eradicating them so thoroughly that it becomes difficult to recognize the initial position in what is left of it. Such sweeping changes imply other features characterizing our illustrative examples.

Each time the material was invested it was a clear-cut, straightforward, mostly one-way path

towards the planned goal. Apart from a few examples which by the degree of their complexity or hidden nature might be considered borderline cases, the options were limited, with only a few branches from the main line. Uncertainties were also limited; clear motifs pointed to clear aims and the results were somehow predictable. The pattern was simple: the superior side offered material and in a few moves reaped the harvest – either winning material back with some surplus or developing a mating attack. As a result, the psychological implications were plain, tensions relatively low, and the risk small or completely non-existent.

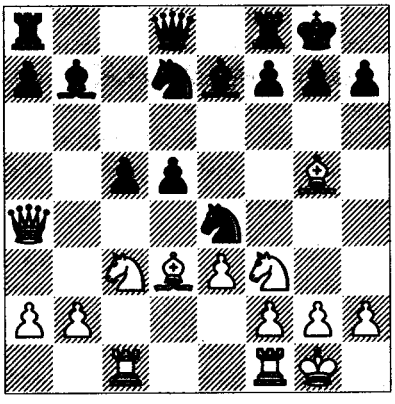
This last point represents an important feature of the pseudo-sacrifice I would like to emphasize: if there is no risk, there is no real sacrifice! When such a sacrifice is very hidden or if the combination lasts longer, annotators are inclined to speak of it as of a real sacrifice. That goes for so-called positional sacrifices too. There is a tendency in chess literature to speak of them as real sacrifices, even when no risk whatever is involved, which is wrong. Positional sacrifices of material, although they show strong tendencies towards the real sacrifice, can be pseudo-sacrifices as well. It depends primarily on the nature of the transformation taking place and the degree of risk involved. We have to weigh, for instance, how deeply an idea is submerged, how far-reaching is the target, how numerous are side-tracks, how big is the risk taken, etc. These factors are the best judge. I would also like to point out that some of our examples are borderline cases, which can be characterized either as pseudo-sacrifices or real sacrifices. Sometimes it's difficult to tell one from the other and analysts will not necessarily agree about it.

And last but not least, there is a quality which sharply distinguishes chess sacrifices from ordinary play. Fruits of a special momentary harmony of effects, the tactical blows we have seen create an aesthetic impression enriching the games in which they occur. The more deeply hidden, the stronger the impression. We feel these are no common, prosaic moves, but a product of exceptional circumstances and interrelations. As I pointed out earlier, a sacrificial combination is a fruit of a creative association of thoughts. It is unique, it cannot be repeated; it is characterized by 'effective surprise'. These traits are essential properties of a creative act in general. At the same time, we understand that technically a sacrificial combination represents a decisive transformation of values, repeated in some new, striking manner in each of the positions we have seen. Later on we shall discuss the real sacrifice as opposed to the type of sacrifice we have just analysed, but before we do so it is an appropriate moment to give some thought to sacrificial risks. In our introductory remarks we identified some critical phenomena which we shall now examine.

3 Sacrificial Risks: *Zwischenzug*

A *zwischenzug*, an in-between move, is not an ordinary move, a part of a regular series. It's a thought interpolated in a longer calculation. The player who plans a sacrificial line calculates a series of moves, linked together by the purpose it is intended to fulfil. A *zwischenzug* does not belong to the groove. It's an isolated thought standing apart and brusquely imposed. And it is therefore easily overlooked. Due to its nature, it is mostly missed by the player who plans a combination as a whole and usually found by the defender who looks critically at it, as his reactions are separate critical thoughts. A *zwischenzug* therefore often comes as a surprise even when not a part of a sacrificial idea, but appears in an ordinary sequence of moves. Have a look at the following encounter:

W



Steinitz – Anderssen
Vienna 1873

Black has just played 12...♘f6-e4, considering in his calculations 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 (13...♘xc3 is forbidden due to 14 ♕h4) 14 ♗xe4 (or 14 ♖fd1 ♘df6) 14...dxe4 15 ♘d2 ♘f6, when it is not easy to make use of the damaged black pawn-structure; on 16 ♘c4, for example, there is 16...a5. However, there was a hole in Anderssen's reasoning which spoilt it all...

13 ♗xe4 dxe4 14 ♖fd1!

Leaving a piece *en prise*, but White expects to get back the sacrificed material with interest. The pin is unpleasant.

14...♗xg5

A counterattack on the white queen does not work: on 14...♘b6 there is 15 ♖xd8 ♘xa4 16 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 17 ♘xa4 f6 18 ♘h4! fxg5 19 ♘f5 ♗f8 20 ♘xc5 ♖c8 21 b4.

15 ♘xg5

15 ♖xd7 ♕c8 16 ♖xb7 (otherwise ...♗c6) is also possible, but it offers less.

15...♕xg5 16 ♖xd7 ♖fb8

16...♗c8 is insufficient due to 17 ♖d5, etc.

17 ♕b3 ♗c6 18 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 19 h4

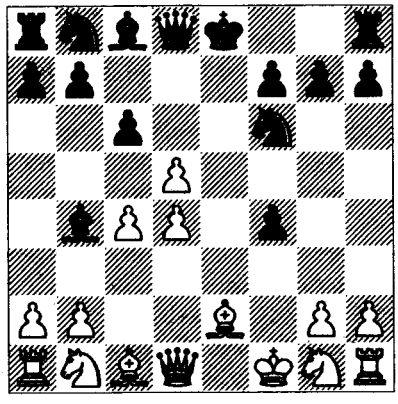
The last little touch: the queen is forced to leave the c5-pawn unprotected.

19...♕g4 20 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 21 ♕xa7 ♖xb2 22 ♕xc5

and all was clear.

Black understood fully the strength of 14 ♖fd1 when he was confronted with it. A moment before it seemed clear that White had to do something about the f3-knight and the g5-bishop. However, such off-the-line ideas strike even the strong and even in a relatively simple series of moves.

B



Tartakower – Capablanca
New York 1924

When White played 7 ♔e1-f1, he had in mind 7...cxd5 8 ♗xf4 dxc4 9 ♗xb8, when he would win the b4-bishop. However, there is a hole in this idea.

7...cxd5 8 ♗xf4 dxc4 9 ♗xb8? ♘d5!

Three tasks in one single move: the b4-bishop is protected against ♕a4+, ...♘e3+ is threatened, while 10 ♗f4 will not do due to 10...♕f6 11 g3 ♘e3+. White has no choice but to accept an unpromising position.

10 ♔f2 ♖xb8 11 ♗xc4 0-0 12 ♘f3

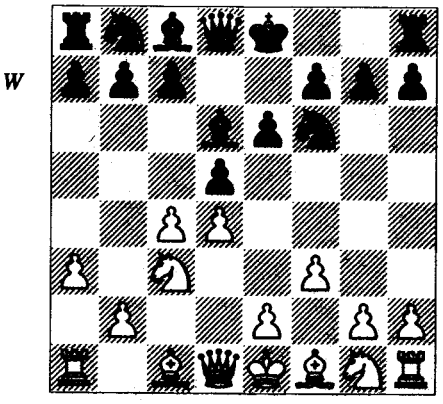
There is no time for 12 ♕b3 because of 12...♕h4+.

12...♘f6 13 ♘c3 b5! 14 ♗d3 ♘g4+ 15 ♔g1 ♗b7

The uncoordinated white pieces cannot stand the pressure.

Gheorghiu – Stein
Mar del Plata 1965
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 ♗d6 *(D)*



6 e4

White wants to seize the centre, and threatens 7 e5.

6...c5!

Stein replies in cold-blooded fashion.

7 cxd5

For the moment 7 e5 would not work due to 7...cxd4, but White thought the preliminary exchange on d5 would make it possible.

7...exd5 8 e5?

Consistent with the previous play, but missing some significant details: the wedge on e5 is supported by a shaky pawn at d4 and, more important, the king is still on e1. Suetin proposed as better 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 ♗g5.

8...cxd4 9 ♕xd4 ♕e7 10 ♗f4 ♘c6 11 ♗b5 0-0! 12 ♗xc6 ♗c5!

Is this what White missed? 12...bxc6 loses to 13 0-0-0, but this *zwischenzug* turns the board upside-down.

13 ♘xd5

White has nothing better than taking the offered pawn. In case of 13 ♕d2 bxc6 Black has stabilized his pawn-centre, while the white king has no secure refuge.

13...♘xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♖d8 15 ♕e4 bxc6 16 ♘e2

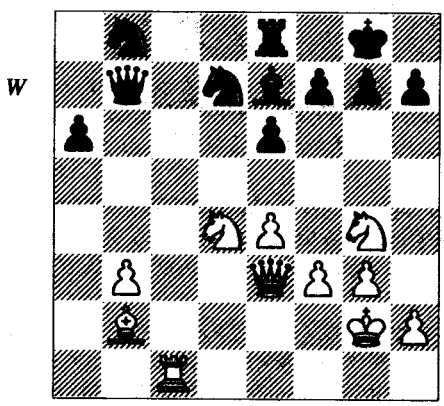
Grabbing another pawn at the present stage of development looks most suspect: 16 ♕xc6 ♗b7 17 ♕b5 ♖ab8 speeds up the counter-attack.

16...♗a6 17 ♗e3 ♖d5 18 f4 ♖ad8 19 ♗xc5

If 19 ♔f2, then 19...♖d3.

19...♕xc5 20 b4 ♕b6 21 ♖f1 ♖d2 0-1

22 ♖f2 fails to 22...♗xe2.



Larsen – Matanović
Zagreb 1965

30 ♖c4

The idea behind this move was so obviously 31 ♕c3 that, if I remember well, Matanović did not spend much time before parrying the double threat...

30...♖c8?

It looked so simple: without weakening his king's position the expected 31 ♕c3 will be met by 31...♖xc4, reducing further the material.

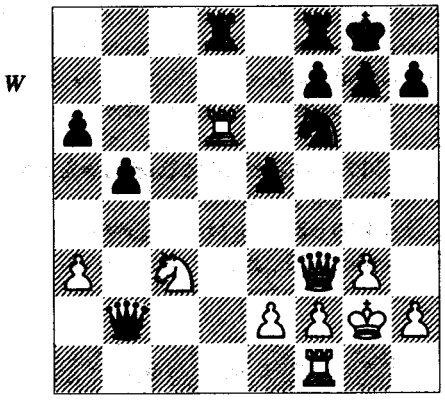
However, what looked obvious was shrouded in furtive imagination.

31 ♘xe6!

The shrewd *zwischenzug* opens the dark diagonal, after which 32 ♕c3 will win the rook. Black could only resign himself to firm but hopeless 31...f6 or die bravely, which he did...

31...♖xc4 32 ♘h6+ 1-0

One ill-considered step, one clever *zwischenzug* and the course of the game was utterly changed. However, such sudden blows hit hard more often in response to a sacrificial combination.



Korchnoi – Hjartarson
St John Ct (4) 1988

Although in great time-trouble, White was not satisfied with the quiet 27 ♖xa6. It occurred to him that the position promised more...

27 ♖xf6?

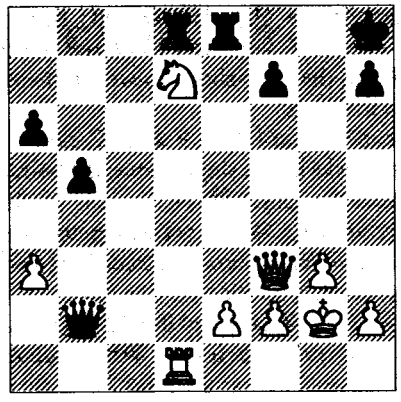
The idea was 27...gxf6 28 ♘e4, when the weakness of the exposed black king represents superb compensation for the exchange. However, the sacrifice met with an unexpected reply...

27...e4!

Black offers a pawn and a tempo to open the dark diagonal. The fact that his queen can take part in the defence dramatically changes matters.

28 ♘xe4 gxf6 29 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 30 ♘d7 ♖fe8 31 ♖d1 ♔h8 *(D)*

Caution is healthy. To 31...♖e7 White would answer 32 ♕g4+ ♔h8 33 ♘f6, while 31...♖xe2 squanders a precious moment, allowing 32 ♖d5, which creates new threats.

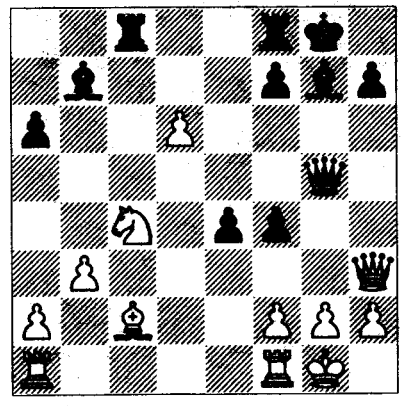


32 ♕f4

32 ♕xf7 ♕g7 simplifies into a won endgame for Black. The text-move prepares ♖d4 in order to close the long diagonal and endanger the black king. However, it is too late by now...

32...♖xe2 33 ♖d4 f5! 34 ♔h3 ♖e7 0-1

White overstepped the time-limit. 35 ♕d6, which he wanted to play, would lose anyway to 35...♖dxd7 36 ♕f6+ ♖g7 37 ♕f8+ ♖g8 38 ♕f6+ ♖dg7, etc.



Anand – Kasimdzhanov
Hyderabad (FIDE WCup) 2002

This position, although far-advanced in the middlegame, has a history. In a number of previous games, after 23 ♖ad1 (the rook is attacked and one expects it must move) 23...f5 the passed pawn lost much of its impetus. However, Anand must have had it on his board during home analysis and he proceeded powerfully.

23 d7!

Two tactical points justify the sudden thrust. On 23...♗xa1, expecting 24 dxc8♕ ♗xc8, when the queen is trapped, White would reply with the counter-blow 24 ♗xe4!, winning material however Black replies. The other tactical point is revealed by White in the game, Of course, Black could avoid both by 23...♖cd8, but after 24 ♖ad1 the thorn on d7 would survive to his great sorrow.

23...♖c6 24 ♗xe4 ♖h6 25 ♕f5 ♕h4

Now it was possible to grab the exchange, but after 25...♕xf5 26 ♗xf5 ♗xa1 27 ♖xa1 the passed pawn represents superb compensation.

26 h3 ♖f6 27 d8♕!

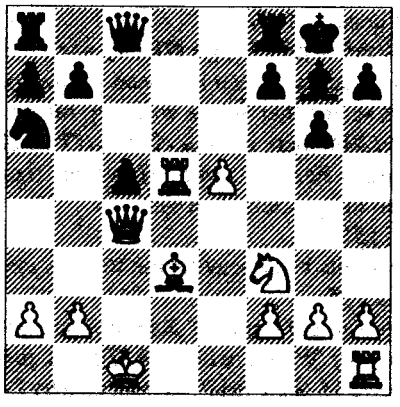
A new *zwischenzug* and a new beautiful point!

27...♖xd8 28 ♕a5 ♗xe4 29 ♕xd8+ ♗f8 30 f3 ♗f5 1-0

Black resigned not waiting for the next move.

Naturally, in more complex tactical positions it is easier to pass by some hidden ambush. Then *zwischenzugs* strike like an earthquake.

W



Beliavsky – Kasparov
Belfort 1988

17 ♖d1

At this point Beliavsky must have seen the response, but his calculations convinced him that things were developing in his favour.

17...b5! 18 ♕h4

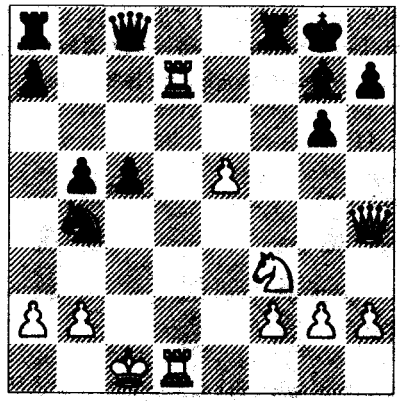
Grabbing the b5-pawn obviously invites trouble. However, when transferring his queen into an attacking position, White had a cunning idea...

18...♘b4 19 ♗xg6

It was on this sacrifice that White pinned his hopes. And indeed, after 19...hxg6 20 ♘g5 ♖e8 21 ♖d7 White wins. Taking with the f-pawn would not appear to change things essentially. Yet...

19...fxg6 20 ♖d7 *(D)*

B



White threatens 21 ♕e7, which cannot be parried by 20...♖e8 because of 21 ♖1d6, when the threat of 22 ♘g5 h6 23 ♕xh6 hangs over Black's head. Thus...

20...♕e8 21 ♖e7

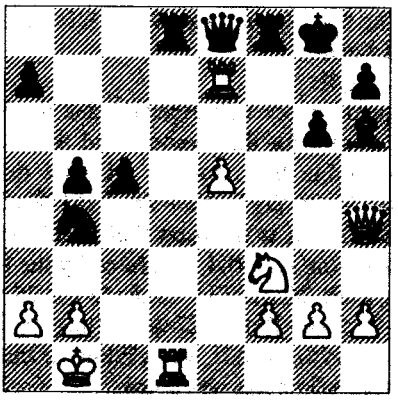
So far so good. By doubling rooks on the seventh rank, White expected to win the queen. However, there was something he missed...

21...♗h6+! 22 ♔b1

Note that 22 ♖d2 does not work owing to 22...g5.

22...♖d8 *(D)*

W



A bolt from the blue. Black's *zwischenzug* 21...♗h6+ pushed the white king into the corner

and all of a sudden it is Black who counterattacks.

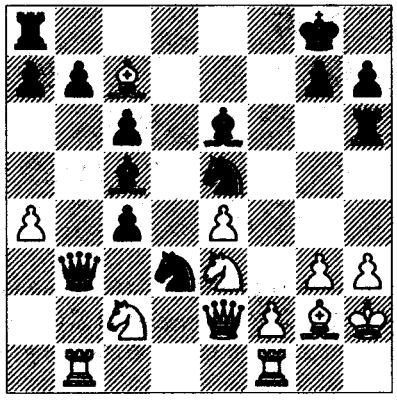
23 ♖d6 ♕c6!!

This hidden point turns the tables. The queen is taboo because of the mate on d1, while 24 ♕xh6 loses to 24...♕e4+ with smothered mate.

24 a3 ♖xd6 25 exd6 ♕xd6 26 axb4 cxb4 27 ♕e4 b3 0-1

White resigned since 28 ♕e6+ would not save his king due to 28...♕xe6 29 ♖xe6 ♖c8 30 ♖e1 ♖c2, when the endgame is hopeless.

B



Topalov – Kramnik
Linares 1997

When attacking the queen by 23 ♖ab1, White obviously expected 23...♕xa4, when the rook penetrates to the seventh rank and makes the position unclear. However, Black does not retreat, but strikes with a tactical blow. What is more, he does so on a seemingly safe and controlled square.

23...♗g4!

A quick glance will ascertain that the black queen is safe for the moment and that White cannot dodge the issue by 24 ♕d2 due to 24...♖xh3+ 25 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 26 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 27 ♘g2 ♗xf2+. It is amazing that 24 f3, apparently winning material, is refuted by the tactical firework 24...♘xf3+ 25 ♗xf3 (or 25 ♔h1 ♗xh3 26 ♗xh3 ♖xh3+ 27 ♔g2 ♖h2+ 28 ♔xf3 ♖f8+, etc.) 25...♗xh3!, when White succumbs. Therefore White has no choice...

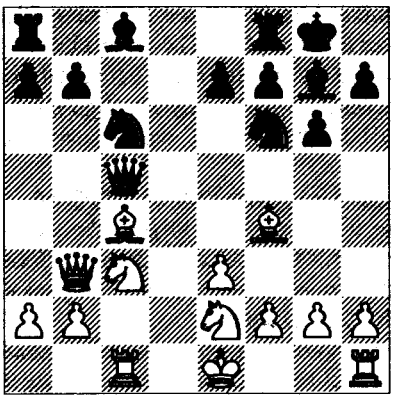
24 ♘xg4 ♘xg4+ 25 ♕xg4 ♕xc2 26 ♕g5

Or 26 f4 ♘f2 27 ♕f3 ♖xh3+ 28 ♗xh3 ♘g4++ with mate.

26...♘xf2

and Black won.

W



Tregubov – Oral
Selfoss 2002

This is a well-known position in Grünfeld opening theory. White now opted for a line where he attempts to exploit his lead in development by energetic action, targeting the exposed queen on c5.

11 ♘b5 ♕h5 12 ♘g3 ♕h4 13 ♘c7

Now that the queen has been pushed out of play, it seems that White will reap his reward. On 13...♖b8 there is 14 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 15 ♖xc6, winning a healthy pawn. However, there is more to the position than that...

13...g5!

Black hits back, leaving the rook *en prise*.

14 ♗xg5

14 ♘xa8 gxf4 and 14 ♗e5 ♖b8 are not appealing for White, while 14 ♘f5 is met by 14...♗xf5 15 ♗g3 ♘d4!, as indicated by Dreev. However, the text-move, which had recently been introduced by Dreev, appears strong.

14...♕xg5 15 ♘xa8

The knight is temporarily out of play, but it seems impossible to trap it.

15...♗d7

15...♕a5+ 16 ♕c3 ♕d8 17 ♖d1 ♗d7 18 ♘f5 is hardly tempting for Black.

16 ♕xb7 ♖b8 17 ♕c7 ♖xa8 18 ♗a6

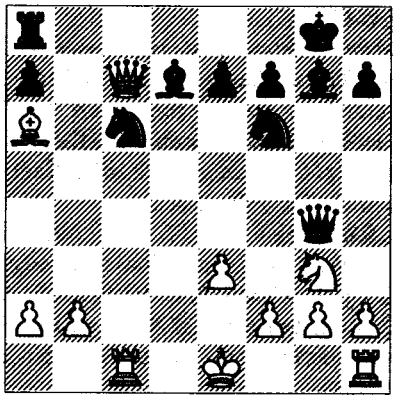
This seems to clinch the issue: 18...♕e5 fails to 19 ♖xc6, 18...♕a5+ to 19 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 20 b4 ♘c6 21 ♗b7, while 18...♖f8 19 0-0 does not leave much hope. 18...♘e8 19 ♕xd7 ♕a5+ 20

b4! ♘xb4 21 0-0 ♕xa6 22 ♘f5 ♘xa2 23 ♖c6! ♕a5 24 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 25 ♘c8 ♕b4? 26 ♖c4! 1-0 was the abrupt conclusion of Dreev-Svidler, Kallithea ECC 2002, played two weeks before the current game.

However, Black found a quiet rejoinder holding on:

18...♕g4!! *(D)*

W



All of a sudden, the d7-bishop is defended by the queen, and the white queen is threatened by 19...♘d5 and his plan halted.

19 0-0

White reacts sensibly. 19 e4? does not work due to 19...♘e8 20 ♕b7 ♖b8. Nor is 19 ♖xc6 ♘d5 20 ♕b7 ♗xc6 21 ♕xc6 ♕b4+ 22 ♔f1 ♖d8 attractive for White.

19...♘d5 20 ♕b7 ♖b8 21 h3

White simplifies into an endgame.

21...♖xb7

Black has no choice since 21...♕e6 is met by 22 ♖xc6.

22 hxg4 ♖xb2 23 ♖fd1 e6 24 e4 ♘b6

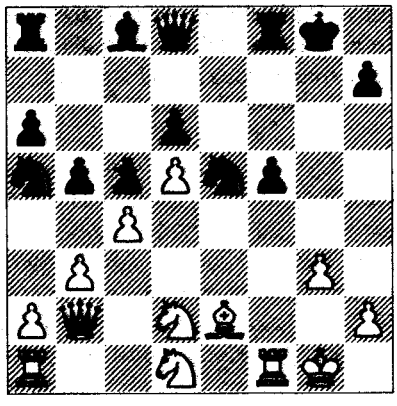
Black has survived the worst.

13...g5 was a sort of *zwischenzug* which complicated the play. Then came 18...♕g4, one of those moves the player who defends a difficult position usually does not see in advance.

Confronted by a forcing attacking line, the defender looks desperately for a saving continuation. He considers all the critical ideas he is able to find until he 'stumbles' upon a saving resource. This can take the form of a quiet move somewhere towards the end of a forcing sequence. Submerged deeply in the position, these moves have the element of surprise and apart from their natural psychological impact often have tremendous actual strength.

4 Sacrificial Risks: Counter-Sacrifice

Judging from master practice, a counter-sacrifice is as dangerous a weapon against material sacrifices as *zwischenzugs* are. I believe the phenomenon is explained by the same psychological reason. Like a *zwischenzug*, a counter-sacrifice does not form a part of the imagined forced flow of moves, and so is easily overlooked. Only a trained mind normally does not leave aside anything and does not miss anything. An essential part of chess training is to increase mental discipline to a high level, at which holes in calculation rarely occur. One cannot eradicate these holes completely, as the following instructive games testify – some of them involve the greatest of players and come from the highest levels of competition.



Petrosian – Spassky
Moscow Wch (10) 1966

Entering this position, both the champion and the challenger had reason for satisfaction; White because he could activate all his pieces quickly and because of the wayward black knight on a5; Black because of the following promising-looking breakthrough:

19...f4!?

Black could postpone the breakthrough and play the logical 19...♖a7, but he understood it was now or never. By sacrificing a pawn, he opens the road to his passive bishop and at the moment that looked more important.

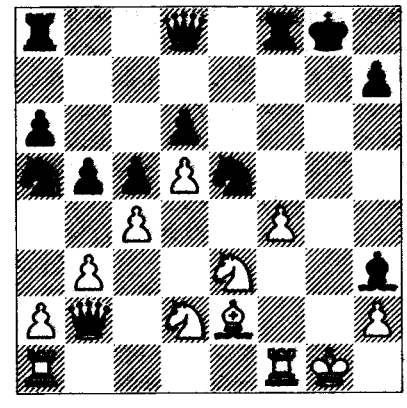
20 gxf4?

Analysts unanimously pointed out 20 ♖xf4 as better. The explanation is obvious: the text-move could be met by the strong 20...♖xf4 when 21 ♘e3 (insufficient is 21 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ 22 ♔h1 ♕xf4) 21...♕g5+ 22 ♔h1 ♖xf1+ 23 ♘dxf1 ♖a7 (Tal) suits Black.

20...♗h3?

This looked like a final blow to the exposed white king: the e5-knight is untouchable, while 21 ♖f2 would be dealt with by 21...♖xf4. What Spassky underrated was White's counter-sacrifice...

21 ♘e3! *(D)*



By offering the exchange, White activates his force at a stroke. It was vital to protect the sensitive squares g2 and g4 so that 21...♖xf4 loses in strength.

21...♗xf1?!

Black's extra exchange will be of little value if the knight remains out of play on a5 – for all practical reasons Black will be a piece down in the critical area of the board. By accepting the sacrifice, Black surrenders light squares to the enemy bishop. 21...♖xf4?! 22 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ is also dubious, due to 23 ♖g4! ♘xg4 24 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 25 ♗xg4 ♕xg4+ 26 ♔h1 ♕d4 27 ♖g1+

♔h8 28 ♕xd4+ cxd4 29 ♘e4 with a superior endgame. However, 21...♘g6 keeps the king better protected.

22 ♖xf1 ♘g6 23 ♗g4!

This makes all the difference. White's tremendous power on the diagonals, supported by two knights ready to join a direct attack in a move or two, cannot be parried any more.

23...♘xf4

Covering the dark diagonal by 23...♕f6 is to no avail because of 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 25 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 26 f5 ♘e5 27 ♘e4 and the vital d6-pawn falls.

24 ♖xf4! ♖xf4 25 ♗e6+ ♖f7 26 ♘e4 ♕h4

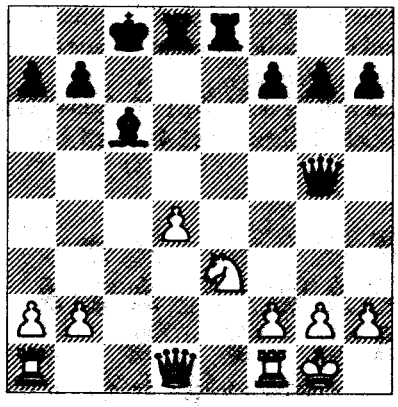
On 26...♖a7, 27 ♘f5 ties Black up with decisive effect.

27 ♘xd6 ♕g5+ 28 ♔h1 ♖aa7

The intended 28...♕xe3 loses the queen after 29 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 30 ♕h8+, etc.

29 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 30 ♕h8+ 1-0

W



Rubinstein – Lasker
St Petersburg 1909

Rather early in the opening Black sacrificed a pawn. He sought compensation in his actively posted pieces, whose pressure has created the direct threat of 16...♖xe3, based on the mate on g2. It seems that giving back the pawn and accepting an inferior endgame by 16 ♕g4+ is the only way for White to save his head. However, White knew better...

16 ♖e1! ♖xe3?!

Both players go in for the forcing line, but they obviously assessed the position differently. Black expected 17 ♖xc6+ bxc6 18 fxe3 ♕xe3+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xd4 (or 19...♕xd4) 20 ♕c2 when he can hold on, although a pawn down. If he had evaluated the coming counter-sacrifice correctly, he would have continued 16...♔b8, accepting an inferior position after 17 ♖c5.

17 ♖xc6+ bxc6 18 ♕c1!

The point of the counter-sacrifice, which Black did not fathom.

18...♖xd4

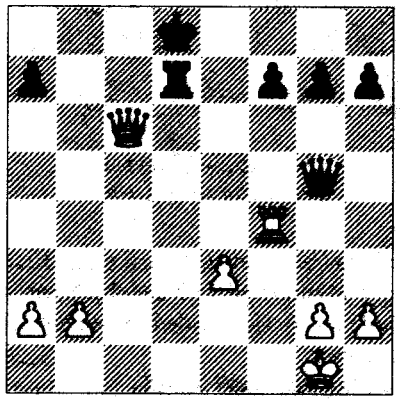
No better is 18...♖e5 19 ♕xc6+ ♔b8 20 dxe5 ♕xe5 21 ♖c1.

19 fxe3 ♖d7

19...♖d6 20 ♖xf7 is no help to Black.

20 ♕xc6+ ♔d8 21 ♖f4! *(D)*

B



Given that the g2-pawn is protected, this excellent move deploys the rook at an attacking position and simultaneously shields the e3-pawn.

21...f5

To parry 22 ♕a8+, Black is compelled to open the position further.

22 ♕c5!

This clinches it. Black has no acceptable reply to the threatened 23 ♕f8+.

22...♕e7

22...♖d1+ 23 ♔f2 ♖d2+ fails to 24 ♔e1 ♕xg2 25 ♕a5+ and 26 ♕xd2, while 22...♔e8 does not work due to 23 h4 ♕e7 (or 23...♕g3 24 ♕e5+ ♔d8 25 ♕b8+ ♔e7 26 ♖e4+) 24 ♕xf5. Thus the game simplifies into a rook endgame that is won for White.

23 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 24 ♖xf5 ♖d1+ 25 ♔f2

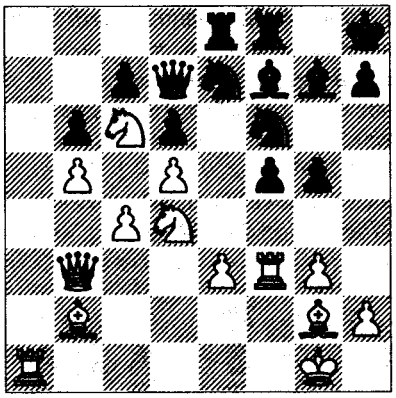
Much stronger than 25 ♖f1 ♖d2 26 ♖b1 ♖e2.

25...♖d2+ 26 ♔f3 ♖xb2 27 ♖a5

The active rook and the passed pawn will slowly push Black towards the brink.

27...♖b7 28 ♖a6 ♔f8 29 e4 ♖c7 30 h4 ♔f7 31 g4 ♔f8 32 ♔f4 ♔e7 33 h5 h6 34 ♔f5 ♔f7 35 e5 ♖b7 36 ♖d6 ♔e7 37 ♖a6 ♔f7 38 ♖d6 ♔f8 39 ♖c6 ♔f7 40 a3 1-0

B



Smyslov – Liberzon
USSR Cht (Riga) 1968

Black has been pushed back to his first two ranks and is burdened with a feeble pawn on f5 and a hole on e6. He decided to free himself by tactical means.

25...♘fxd5 26 cxd5 ♗xd5

He was obviously expecting 27 ♕c2 ♗e4 when he still has some wind in his sails, when he was struck by an 'improbable' counterblow:

27 ♘xf5!!

The opened dark-squared diagonal works miracles.

27...♖xf5

This is Black's one continuation worth considering. 27...♘xf5 is forbidden due to 28 ♕xd5 ♗xb2 29 ♖af1, when the pin wins a piece, while the queen is taboo because 27...♗xb3 28 ♗xg7+ ♔g8 29 ♘cxe7+ ♖xe7 30 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 31 ♖a8+ ♔f7 32 ♘d4+ gets more than enough material in return.

28 ♗xg7+ ♔g8

The best defence. After 28...♔xg7 29 ♕c3+ ♔g8 30 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 31 ♖f1 Black suffers a serious loss of material.

29 ♖xf5!

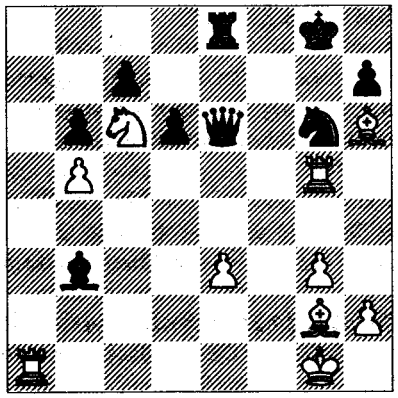
The second hidden point on which White's tactical idea is based: the queen is offered for a mating attack.

29...♗xb3 30 ♖xg5 ♘g6 *(D)*

30...h6 puts up stronger resistance.

31 ♗h6 ♕e6 *(D)*

W



32 h4

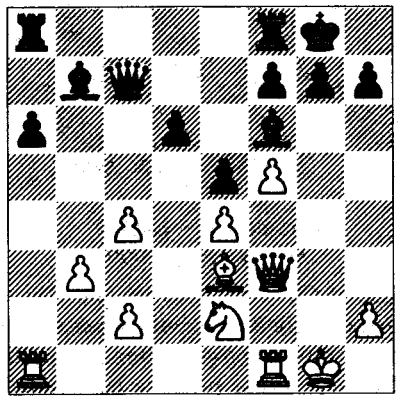
The king shut in his corner will have no peace.

32...♕xe3+ 33 ♔h2 ♕c3 34 ♖f1 ♗c4 35 ♖f2 ♕e1 36 ♖gf5

The menacing h5 cannot be parried successfully and what follows are just some desperate last-minute attempts.

36...♗xb5 37 ♗d2 ♕b1 38 ♗d5+ ♔h8 39 ♗c3+ ♘e5 40 ♘xe5 dxe5 41 ♖xe5 1-0

B



Fischer – Hamann
Netanya 1968

At the end of the opening phase the pawn-structure favoured White. However, Black had an interesting sacrificial idea to activate his bishop-pair:

19...d5?! 20 exd5 e4

By giving up a pawn (the second one at e4 is obviously taboo), Black has enabled his dark-squared bishop to reach far to grab the a1-rook. However, Fischer's refutation was stunningly simple.

21 ♕g3! ♕xg3+ 22 ♘xg3 ♗xa1 23 ♖xa1

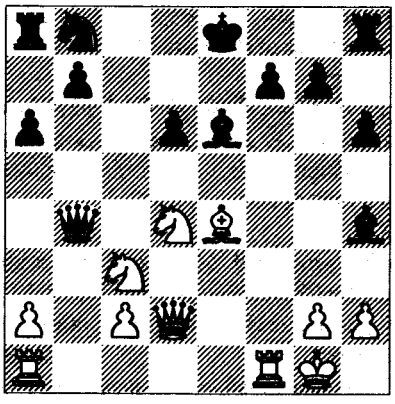
The sudden simplification has taken the sting out of Black's intentions. What remains is a bleak-looking ending in which White's mobile pawn-majority on the queenside has become a decisive factor.

23...f6 24 ♔f2 ♖fe8 25 ♖d1 a5

If 25...♖ad8, then 26 ♖d4.

26 c5 ♖ed8 27 c4 a4 28 b4 a3 29 b5 a2 30 ♖a1 ♖a4 31 c6 ♗c8 32 ♗b6 1-0

B



Gipslis – Korchnoi
Tashkent 1958

In a sharp variation of the Najdorf Sicilian Black grabbed a pawn on b2, but at the moment his pieces are strewn around without coordination and he suffers from obvious backward development. This all causes some worries about his prospects. A sharp interesting struggle continued along the lines White had envisaged when entering the position.

16...♗g5 17 ♕d3 ♗c4 18 ♕h3 ♗xf1!

Winning material while the king is exposed in the middle of the board may have looked risky in the calculations leading to this position. At least White thought so.

19 ♕c8+ ♗d8 20 ♘e6

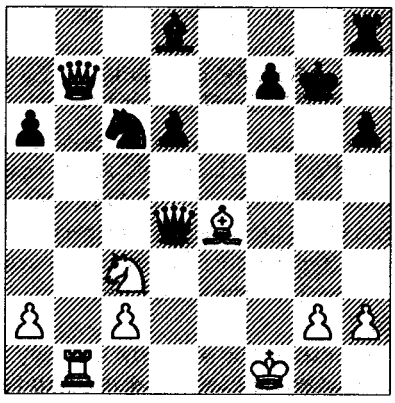
It was on this cunning move that White pinned his hopes. Castling has been prevented, while the knight is taboo, because 20...fxe6 21 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 22 ♕c8+ ♔f7 23 ♗d5+ would cause a sudden demise. However, the defence was tougher than White expected.

20...♕b6+ 21 ♔xf1 ♘c6!

The counter-sacrifice brings in the reserves while keeping the queen out of play. Taking into consideration that 22 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 23 ♕g4 would not work due to 23...♖g8, a forced series of moves is imposed on White.

22 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 23 ♕xa8 ♔xg7 24 ♖b1 ♕d4 25 ♕xb7 *(D)*

B



25...♘a5!

Simple and strong. The white queen has been freed relatively quickly, but now the small but perfectly coordinated black force hits back. Now it is the white king exposed and vulnerable. By threatening to win material, Black attacks vigorously.

26 ♕b4 ♘c4 27 ♗d3 ♗b6 28 ♘e4 ♕g1+ 29 ♔e2 ♕xg2+ 30 ♔d1

Not 30 ♔e1 ♗a5.

30...♕f3+ 31 ♗e2 ♕h1+ 32 ♕e1 ♕xe4 33 ♕g3+ ♔f8 34 ♗xc4 ♕d4+ 35 ♕d3 ♕g1+ 36 ♕f1 ♖g8!

The final point! White is hit at the very moment he thought he had extricated himself from his predicament. Given that 37 ♖xb6 would fail to 37...♕d4+, the rook enters the scene decisively.

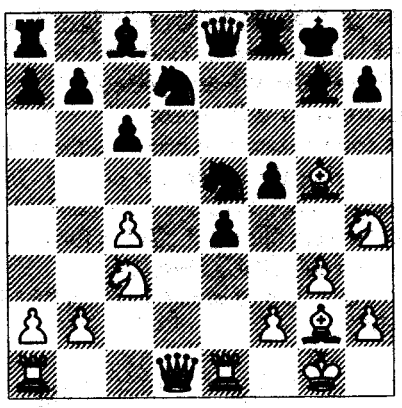
37 c3 d5

Protecting the f7-pawn brings down the curtain.

38 ♗xa6 ♕xh2 39 ♕f6 ♖g1+ 40 ♗f1 ♗e3 0-1

The execution was carried out in an exemplary manner.

W



Kotov – Bronstein
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1944

When Black concluded his active opening plan by 16...♘g4-e5, he must have been satisfied with his achievements. However, the following energetic move, designed to counter Black's initiative, raises some doubts...

17 f4!?

An interesting but somehow unlikely idea. However, when we examine it, we start to like it. We discard 17...exf3 in principle and we note that 17...♘xc4 fails to 18 ♘xe4. Less clear seems to be 17...♘d3, but then 18 ♘xf5! dispels any doubts: 18...♖xf5 does not work due to 19 ♕xd3, while 18...♘xe1 19 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕d4+ ♔g8 (or 20...♘f6 21 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 22 ♘xe4) 21 ♖xe1 favours White. At first all looks clear. The only shortcoming of the move is that it traps its own bishop and that is the factor that Bronstein seeks to exploit. A change of feeling sets in again: we are not so sure any more...

17...h6! 18 ♘xf5

The lead in development and actively placed pieces still seem to give full credibility to the knight sacrifice. It grows into an apparently strong initiative.

18...♖xf5

If 18...hxg5, then 19 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 20 fxe5 ♘xe5 21 ♘xe4.

19 ♘xe4 ♕f8

19...hxg5 20 ♘d6 ♕f8 transposes to the next note.

20 ♘d6 ♖xg5?

Black probably concluded it was time to cash in. Only in the after-game peace did he discover that 20...hxg5!! 21 ♘xf5 gxf4! 22 ♘xg7 f3 turns the tables. The reduction of material saps the strength of White's attack and so Black's counterplay takes the upper hand.

The appealing text-move preserves material, but gives up the initiative.

21 fxg5 hxg5 22 ♖f1 ♕e7 23 ♘f5 ♕c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♘f6

Black's king is weak and he is behind in development, but he still tries to hide these shortcomings by active play.

25 ♘xg7 ♘eg4

25...♔xg7 does not work due to 26 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 27 ♕d8+, and if 25...♘fg4, then 26 ♕d8+ ♔xg7 27 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 28 ♖f7 would decide.

26 ♖xf6

The exchange of attacking units reduces the threats and lessens the pressure. It is often the critical moment of the fight.

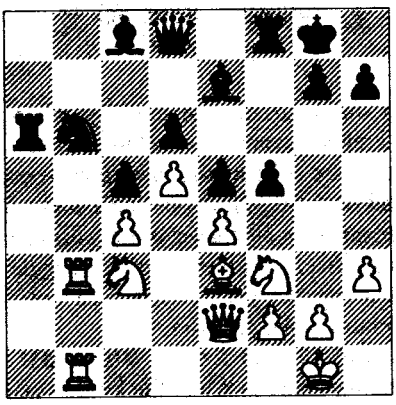
26...♔xg7

Given that 26...♘xf6 27 ♘h5 ♘g4 loses to 28 ♕d8+ ♔h7 29 ♗e4+, there was no alternative. Exchanges of the active black pieces has deprived him of counterplay.

27 ♖f1

Black is material down and still undeveloped, while 27...♘f2+ 28 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 29 ♕b3 would just exacerbate his difficulties. White won shortly.

W



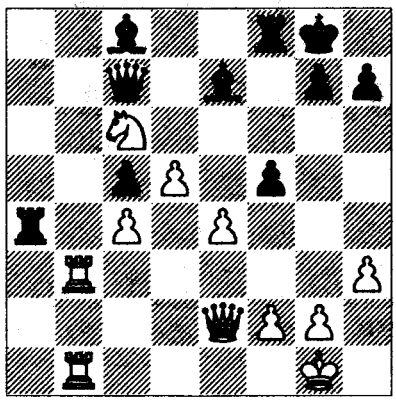
Shirov – Grishchuk
New Delhi FIDE KO 2000

Having blocked White's queenside initiative, Black boldly struck by 23...f7-f5. Shirov must have been expecting it. Anyway, he was ready...

24 ♗xc5! dxc5 25 ♘xe5

Two pawns for a piece would not be enough, if it were not for other circumstances. For the time being the threat of ♘c6 keeps Black's hands tied. It cannot be prevented (25...♗d7 26 ♖xb6 and 25...♗b7 26 exf5 are inadequate for Black) and Black is obliged to resort to other options.

25...♘a4 26 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 27 ♘c6 ♕c7 *(D)*



28 e5

As simple as that: the central pawn bulwark secures a large spatial advantage in compensation for the material.

28...♖a6!

A necessary and good reaction. The apparently natural 28...♗a6 fails to 29 ♖b6, which was threatened anyway. White must now consider 29...♖xc6.

29 ♕f3?!

29 ♘b8? is pointless due to 29...♖g6, given that 30 d6 ♗xd6 relieves Black, but 29 ♘xe7+ would untie White's hands and preserve the positive aspects of his position. The text-move neutralizes the threat of a counter-sacrifice on c6, but judging from the strong and natural reply offers Black respite.

29...f4

Obvious but good; Black needs space and in passing threatens 30...♖xc6. Besides, from now on White will always have to keep in mind the potential ...f3.

30 ♖e1 ♗f5 31 ♖b5 ♗c2

If 31...♗g6 at once, then 32 ♕b3.

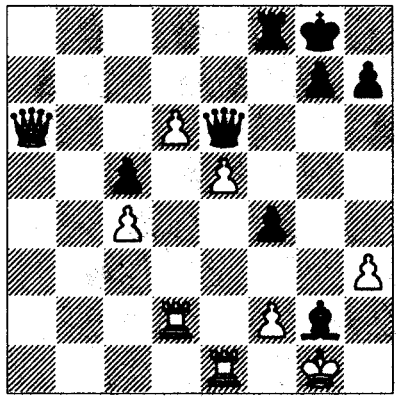
32 ♖b2 ♗g6 33 ♖d2 ♗e8

Note that 33...♖xc6 does not work due to 34 dxc6 ♗e8 35 ♖d7 ♗xd7 36 ♕d5+ ♔h8 37 cxd7, when the far-advanced central pawns secure a vast spatial advantage.

34 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 35 d6 ♕e6 36 ♕b7

White seems to have taken advantage of his spatial superiority. Black has no time to save the rook because of 37 d7. 36...f3 is also parried by 37 d7. Things looked bleak for Grishchuk, when he struck back with a brilliant idea:

36...♗c6!! 37 ♕xa6 ♗xg2 *(D)*



While the white queen is stranded on the other wing, the counter-sacrifice breaks the king's position and opens the way for a lasting initiative. The first effect is that 38 ♔xg2 f3+ 39 ♔h2 ♕h6 threatens 40...♕f4+ 41 ♔h1 ♕f5 with a repetition of moves. On 40 ♖d4 Shirov gave 40...cxd4 41 c5 ♕g5 42 ♕c4+ ♔h8 43 ♕f1 d3 44 e6 ♕xc5.

38 f3 ♗xf3 39 ♔h2 ♗g4!

Black continues to surprise us. The new offer tries to reach the king in its hide-out before the inexorable advance of the passed duo.

40 ♕b7

After 40 hxg4 ♕xg4 there is no way to protect the king against checks without losing material.

40...♕h6 41 ♕d5+

41 ♕g2 loses to 41...f3 42 ♕f2 ♗xh3.

The text-move is a *zwischenzug* with a subtle point: if Black replies 41...♔h8, then 42 ♕g2 f3 43 ♖f2 wins, which explains Black's reply.

41...♖f7 42 ♔g1

It's easy to find out that 42 e6 ♕xh3+ leads to perpetual check.

42...♕xh3 43 ♕g2 ♕h4 44 ♖f2 f3?

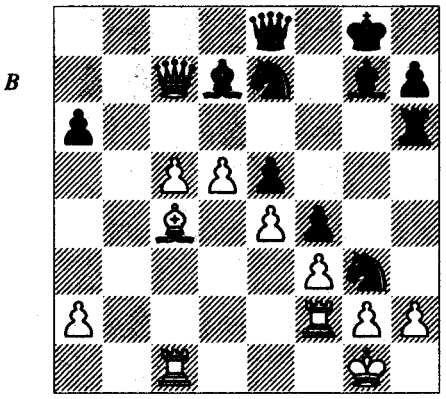
With a draw at hand, Black stumbles and blunders. 44...♗h3 45 ♕a8+ ♖f8 46 ♕d5+

♔h8 47 ♕f3 ♕g5+ 48 ♔h2 ♕h4 would hold the balance. One blunder can do more than a series of extraordinary moves!

45 e6 ♖f8

Perhaps it was 45...♗xe6 46 ♖xe6 that Black overlooked.

46 e7 ♖e8 47 d7 ♗xd7 48 ♕xf3 ♕g5+ 49 ♔f1 1-0



Auchenberg – Elgaard
Faxe-Grand-Prix 1992

White has sacrificed a substantial amount of material. Although the first feeling is that Black might have something on the h-file, this hope soon dwindles when we notice that 29...♕h5 loses to 30 d6+ and that 29...♖xh2 30 d6+ ♔h8 31 ♖b2 simultaneously threatens 32 ♔xh2 and 32 ♖b8, both of which cannot apparently be parried. However, in this great predicament Elgaard relied on his queen...

29...♖xh2! 30 d6+ ♔h8 31 ♖b2

On 31 ♖fc2 there is 31...♖h1+ 32 ♔f2 ♘c6 and Black will blockade the passed pawns.

31...♖h1+ 32 ♔f2 ♖xc1 33 ♖b8 ♘c8 34 c6

Given that 34...♖xc4 loses to 35 cxd7, this looked like the end of the struggle, but Black pulls out of his hat some unexpected answers...

34...♕g8!

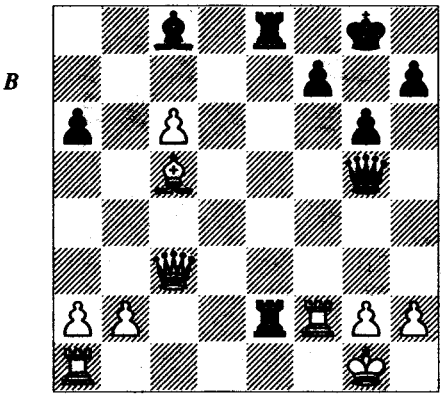
Nice, but apparently unimpressive, because 35 cxd7 looks like a simple win.

35 cxd7 ♗f8!! 36 ♖xc8 ♘h1+

Now we see the point behind Black's 34th move. The bishop protected the eighth rank, and simultaneously opened the g-file for the queen's mating inroad.

37 ♔e2 ♕xg2+ 38 ♔d3 ♕c2# (0-1)

The only thing we have to be absolutely sure about is that such a seemingly devastating blow is not met with a sweeping counter-blow. Take a look at what befell Black in the next example:



Michenka – Hagara
Trinec 1998

Black struck by:

22...♗h3

He threatens 23...♖xf2 as well as 23...♗xg2, while 23 ♕xh3 ♕xc5 or 23 g3 ♖xf2 24 ♗xf2 ♕d5 does not help White. However, at the climax of tension there came a stunning cold-blooded response:

23 ♗f8!!

Black's dream abruptly falls apart. The bishop is taboo, 23...f6 fails to 24 ♕c4+, while 23...♕e5 does not work due to 24 ♖xe2 ♕xc3 25 bxc3 ♖xe2 26 gxh3 ♔xf8 27 c7 ♖e8 28 ♖b1, etc. The end was less poetic:

23...♖2e5 24 ♗d6 ♖e3 25 ♗f4 ♖xc3 26 ♗xg5 ♖c5 27 ♗f4 ♗c8 28 c7

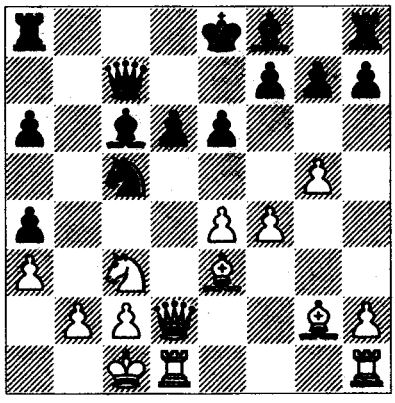
Black is lost.

Such is the tremendous power of the hidden counter-sacrifices lying in ambush until we trip over them. Taken by surprise, we lose our footing and fall more often than perhaps we objectively should. However, that, too, is a vital part of their psychological strength.

5 Sacrificial Risks: Simplification

Reduction of material is one of the crucial transformations characterizing the game of chess. A large number of pieces represents a threatening mass of material, capable of generating tactical blows and attacking chances. By reducing its mass we reduce the opponent's capability to act. There are many possible reasons why one side might wish to exchange material. Sometimes it's the best defence against a growing attack, while sometimes a path to a material advantage, but it's mostly a route to an ending. The goal is always the same in principle: to create favourable conditions by transforming the nature of the position on the board. That's the theme of this short chapter.

W



Karpov – Kudriashov
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1972

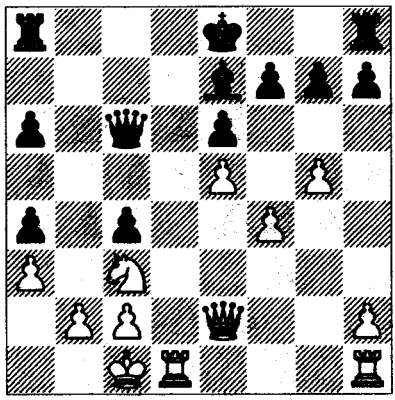
An exchange of knights on a4 opened the b-file for a possible attack by Black's major pieces, and may seem disturbing at first sight. However, Karpov looked deeper into the position...

17 ♗xc5! dxc5 18 e5

White's intentions become clear. Making use of his lead in development, White starts exchanging pieces. He succeeds in both reducing Black's chances of a counter-attack on the b-file and changing the character of the position to his liking and to the needs of his knight.

18...♗e7 19 ♗xc6+ ♕xc6 20 ♕e2 c4 *(D)*
Otherwise 21 ♕c4.

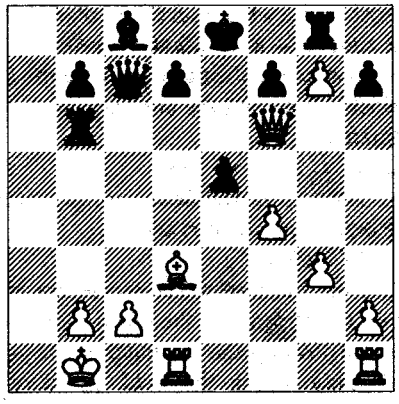
W



21 ♕e4! ♖c8 22 ♕xc6+ ♖xc6 23 ♘xa4

As a result of the forcing variation, White won material and created excellent chances to transform it into victory. The reduction of material served its purpose fully.

W



Fischer – Tal
Bled 1961

Behind in development and with his king stranded precariously in the centre, Tal was hoping to avoid the worst after the exchange of

queens on e5, but his opponent found a merciless way to finish the struggle...

23 fxe5! ♖xf6 24 exf6 ♕c5

Or 24...♕b6 25 ♖hf1 followed by 25 ♗xh7.

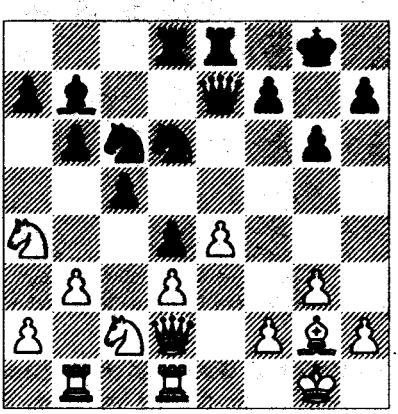
25 ♗xh7 ♕g5 26 ♗xg8 ♕xf6 27 ♖hf1 ♕xg7 28 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 29 ♗e6 ♕h6

After 29...♔c7 30 ♗f5, doubling rooks on the d-file would do the job.

30 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 31 ♖f7

White has reached a very simple winning endgame.

B



Smyslov – Tal
USSR Spartakiad (Moscow) 1964

We could say that in this middlegame position most of the white pieces are placed on the wrong squares – a sign that White committed numerous errors in the early phase of the struggle. Black's force, on the contrary, is perfectly coordinated.

20...f5!

This blow from the side springs naturally from Black's harmonious activity.

21 exf5 ♘e5!

While the mass of white pieces are strewn about on the queenside, the pawn sacrifice has opened the position and created pressure against White's king. Black threatens 22...♗xg2 23 ♔xg2 ♕b7+.

22 f4 ♘f3+ 23 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 24 ♖e1 ♕e2!!

This stunning sacrifice conceals an equally stunning purpose.

25 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 26 ♕xe2

Preserving the material advantage by 26 ♕c1 is unappealing. For example: 26...♖g2+ 27 ♔f1 ♖xh2 28 ♘e1 (or 28 ♕b2 ♘xf5) 28...♗d5 29 ♖b2 (or 29 ♘b2 ♖e8 30 ♘c4 ♗xc4 31 bxc4 ♘xf5 32 ♖b2 ♘xg3+ 33 ♔g1 ♖ee2) 29...♖h1+ 30 ♔f2 ♖e8, when activating his material proves an impossible mission for White.

26...♗xe2 27 ♘b2

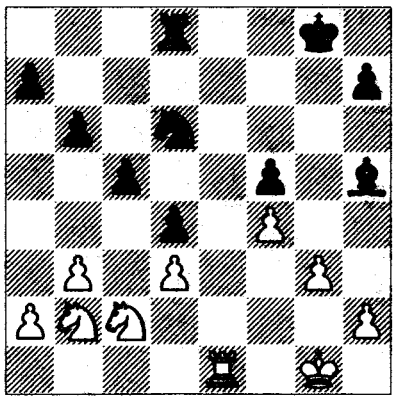
White cannot afford to grab a pawn by 27 fxg6 ♗xd3 28 gxh7+ ♔xh7 29 ♖c1 because of 29...♗xc2 30 ♖xc2 d3 31 ♖c1 d2 32 ♖f1 ♘e4 33 ♘b2 ♘c3 34 ♘d1 ♘xd1 35 ♖xd1 b5, etc.

27...gxf5

What a change in a couple of moves! Only the pawn-structure reminds us that we are still following the same game. This was the position Black was seeking when he sacrificed his queen. We know now that his judgement was correct. In this endgame he can rely on his superior pawn-formation and the superior bishop versus knight.

28 ♖e1 ♗h5 *(D)*

W



29 ♘c4

There's little use in penetrating down the open file because 29 ♖e7 would be opposed by 29...♖e8, like in the game. It is natural that White swaps off his passive knight, but even that is water to Black's mill – all White's queenside pawns remain on the same colour squares as the black bishop.

29...♘xc4 30 bxc4 ♖e8 31 ♔f2 ♖xe1 32 ♔xe1

If 32 ♘xe1, then 32...a6 33 ♘f3 (trying to build a fortress by 34 ♘e5) 33...♗xf3 34 ♔xf3 b5 and the pawn endgame is lost for White. The fact that White loses after an exchange of minor pieces has a major influence on further events.

32...♔f8 33 ♔d2 ♔e7 34 ♘e1 a6 35 a4 a5

White could not allow ...b5, but now the weakness on a4 is lasting. Of course, 35...♗e8? 36 a5 would finish in a draw.

36 ♔e2 ♗e8 37 ♔b3 ♗c6 38 ♔a3 ♔f6 39 ♔b3 ♔g6 40 ♔a3 ♔h5 41 h3 ♔g6 42 ♔b3 ♔g7 43 ♔a3 ♔f6 44 ♔b3 ♗e8 45 ♘g2

45 ♘f3 ♗h5 46 ♘e5 ♗d1+ 47 ♔a3 ♔e6 48 ♘c6 ♗e2 49 ♘e5 h6 will lead eventually to zugzwang. For instance, 50 ♔b3 (50 g4 loses to 50...♗d1) 50...♗f1 51 h4 ♗e2 52 ♔c2 ♗h5 53 ♔b3 ♗d1+ 54 ♔a3 ♗c2.

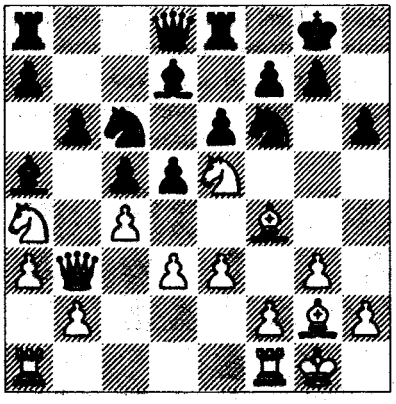
45...♗h5 46 ♔e2 ♗e2 47 ♘e1 ♗f1 48 ♘f3

If 48 h4 then 48...♗e2 49 ♔d2 ♗h5 50 ♔c2 ♗e8 51 ♔b3 ♗c6 and the king will penetrate via h5.

48...♗xh3 49 ♘g5 ♗g2 50 ♘xh7+ ♔g7 51 ♘g5 ♔g6

White is lost; he cannot defend the a4-pawn and prevent the black king from penetrating on the other wing.

B



Topalov – Kramnik
Dortmund 2001

We are at the sensitive point of transition into the middlegame, when usually important decisions must be taken, shaping the struggle ahead. Such is Black's next decision:

13...g5!

Many a player would hesitate to choose a move of this kind or would simply pass it by, unaware of its practical strength. The unexpected advance leads into a series of exchanges. Let's see what they bring about.

14 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 15 ♗e5 ♘g4 16 ♗c3 ♗xc3 17 ♘xc3 dxc4 18 dxc4 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♕e7

As a result of the sweeping exchanges the position has been transformed, so that the black king feels very safe in spite of the apparently weakening ...g5, but the white king is somewhat uncomfortable in view of the latent pressure on the long a8-h1 diagonal. Besides, note that having played a3 White has weakened his queenside pawn-structure, in particular the c4-pawn, which he must keep in mind constantly.

20 ♘e4?!

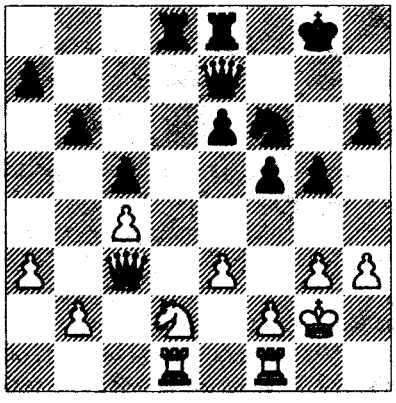
Although White's position seems quite safe, as soon as you look into it concretely, you start to feel uneasy. The knight exerts pressure on e3 while there is the potential weakness of the f3-square after 20...♕b7+ and 21...♘e5. White has no way to get rid of that pressure by forceful means. Thus 20 h3 can be met by the unpleasant 20...♕b7+, provoking 21 e4, when the d4-square is left at Black's mercy and the knight manoeuvre ...♘e5-c6-d4 becomes an additional motif. On 20 ♕d1, 20...♘e5 threatens not only the c4-pawn, but the most inconvenient 21...g4 as well. The white queen needs to be brought into battle, but this should be done via c2, when the e4-square is at hand in order to neutralize either the check from b7 or ...♘e5. After 20 ♕c2 f5 White needs to play the energetic 21 ♕e2 (21 e4 f4 would secure e5 for the dominant black knight) 21...♕b7+ 22 ♔g1 (after 22 f3 ♘e5 White is exposed to 23...g4) 22...♘e5 23 f4.

20...f5 21 h3 ♘e5

If 21...♕b7, then 22 f3.

22 ♕c3 ♘d7 23 ♘d2 ♖ad8 24 ♖ad1 ♘f6 *(D)*

W



25 ♘f3

The knight is awkwardly posted at d2 and must move before Black doubles the rooks.

25...♖xd1! 26 ♖xd1 e5

Exchanging a pair of rooks surrendered the d-file to White, but Black has won a valuable tempo to advance the pawn and seize space in the centre. 27...♕b7 is threatened.

27 ♕c2

White's choice is limited by the unpleasant possibility of a pin on the long diagonal. The alternative is 27 ♘e1 (27...♕b7+ 28 ♔g1), although at e1 the knight does not make us happy.

27...e4 28 ♘g1 ♖d8 29 ♘e2 ♖xd1 30 ♕xd1 ♕d7

Excellent! Having created the preconditions for a superior endgame, Black has exchanged all the major pieces. Black's spatial advantage on the kingside and better pawn-formation on the queenside favour his knight and king.

31 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 32 b3 ♘e5 33 ♘c3 ♔f7 34 g4

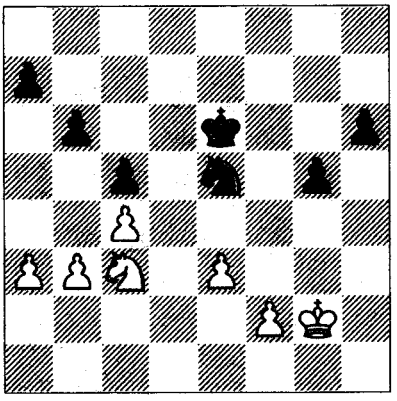
Further reducing material obviously leads to new difficulties, but 34 ♘b5 a5 35 a4 ♘f3 does not look promising either.

34...fxg4 35 hxg4 ♘xg4 36 ♘xe4 ♔e6

White is in for serious difficulties due to his inferior pawn-structure in spite of the heavily reduced material. Since Lasker-Nimzowitsch, Zurich 1934, we have been fully aware of the strength of an outer passed rook's pawn in this type of ending.

37 ♘c3 ♘e5 *(D)*

W



38 f4

This allows Black to emphasize the significance of his outer passed pawn. White can try 38 ♘b5!?, when 38...♘c6?! 39 ♔g3 h5 40 f4 gxf4+ 41 ♔xf4 h4 42 b4! (42 ♔g4 puts up little resistance, as analysed by Kramnik: 42...♔e5 43 ♔xh4 ♔e4) leads to further simplifications and gives White drawing chances; for instance, 42...h3 43 ♔g3 cxb4 (or 43...♔e5 44 bxc5 bxc5 45 ♘c3) 44 axb4 ♔e5 45 c5. However, 38...a5 is better: 39 ♘c7+?! ♔f5 40 ♘d5?! a4! (40...♘d3 41 ♘xb6 ♘c1 42 b4 axb4 43 axb4 cxb4 44 c5 ♔e6 45 c6 ♔d6 46 c7), when 41 f4 fails to 41...gxf4 42 exf4 axb3.

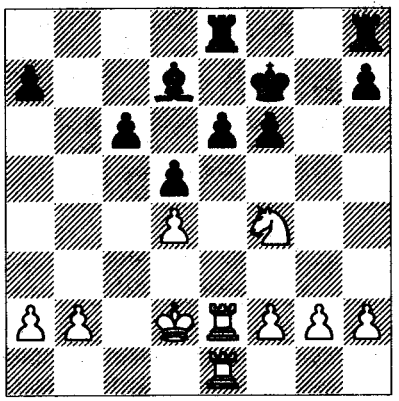
38...gxf4 39 exf4 ♘c6 40 ♘b5 h5 41 ♔g3 a5

White is lost. The passed pawn on the h-file will be costly indeed. For the record, this is how the game ended:

42 ♘c7+ ♔f5 43 ♘d5 ♘d4 44 ♔h4 ♘xb3 45 ♔xh5 ♘d2 46 ♘xb6 ♔xf4 47 ♘a4 ♘e4 0-1

Transferring the struggle to a favourable endgame is a process which usually does not stop there. It usually leads into new simplifications. They are a natural path to victory, many a time the unique path one can take and therefore worth some material sacrifice. The exchange sacrifice is a very common means in the process.

B



Anand – Bareev
Shenyang (FIDE WCup) 2001

Black's mass of central pawns has a natural desire to expand and free the d7-bishop. It looks like the right moment for action, since otherwise 23 ♘d3 would subdue the dynamic potential of the black formation. Thus...

22...c5 23 dxc5 e5

The avalanche starts rolling menacingly. 24 ♘xd5 apparently fails to 24...♗b5, while 24 ♘d3 ♖hg8 should not worry Black. However...

24 ♘xd5! ♗b5 25 ♔c3

Moving away from the mined open file, White sacrifices an exchange. Of course, it's a pseudo-sacrifice, by which apart from the material equivalent he gets a mobile queenside majority.

25...♗xe2 26 ♖xe2 ♖c8?

Anand gives as correct 26...♖d8! 27 ♔c4 ♔e6 28 ♖d2 ♖d7. Then:

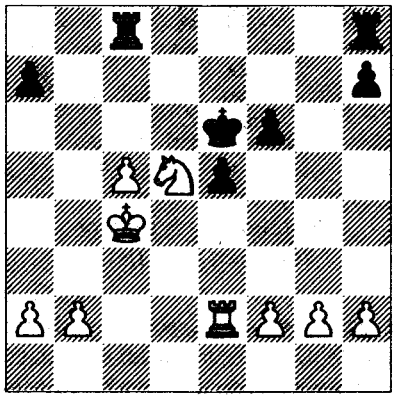
a) He dismisses 29 f4? due to 29...e4 30 ♖d4 (30 c6 ♖d6 31 ♔c5 ♖hd8 32 ♘c7+ ♔e7 33 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 34 ♘d5+ fails to 34...♖xd5+) 30...f5 31 g4 ♖hd8 32 gxf5+ ♔f7! 33 c6 ♖d6 34 ♔c5 e3 35 c7 e2 36 cxd8♕ ♖xd8 37 ♖e4 ♖e8.

b) 29 c6 ♖d6 30 ♔c5 ♖hd8 31 c7 (or 31 ♘c7+ ♔e7 32 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 33 ♘d5+ ♔e6 34 ♘f4+ ♔e7!) 31...♖xd5+ 32 ♖xd5 ♖xd5+ 33 ♔c6 ♖d6+ 34 ♔c5 with a draw.

The text-move vacates d8 for the king's rook, but the lost tempo proves fatal.

27 ♔c4 ♔e6 *(D)*

27...a5 28 a3 would not stop the deadly advance of the pawn-majority.



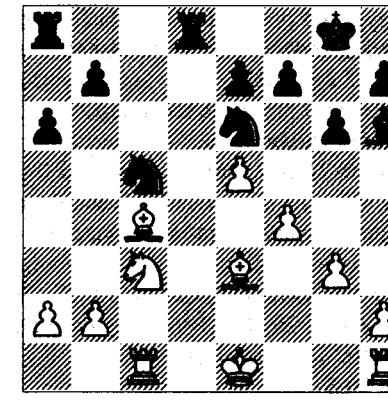
28 b4 ♖hd8 29 ♖d2 ♖d7 30 f4 e4

Given that f5+ is available, 30...♖cd8 would not threaten anything.

31 ♖d4 f5 32 g4 ♖g7

The point is that the intended 32...♖cd8 does not work any more because of 33 c6 ♖d6 34 gxf5+ ♔f7 35 b5, when 35...e3 loses to 36 c7 e2 (or 36...♖e8 37 ♘xe3) 37 ♖e4. The presented tempo was used well and the b-pawn was just on time to support its comrade on the neighbouring file. The rest was simple.

33 ♘e3 fxg4 34 ♖d6+ ♔f7 35 ♘f5 e3 36 ♘xg7 ♖e8 37 ♘xe8 e2 38 ♖f6+ 1-0



Zviagintsev – Turov
Linares open 2001

The strong white bishop-pair compared with Black's shut-out bishop and unstable knights give us some basic information on the position. On the other hand, 17...b5 is threatened and there is the simplifying 17...♘d3+ which must be considered too.

17 ♘d5!

This takes into account both possibilities.

17...b5

17...♘d3+? loses to 18 ♗xd3 ♖xd5 19 ♗c4 ♖d7 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 h4, with a simplified position where the bishop is impotent. 17...♔f8? 18 ♘b6 ♖ab8 19 b4 ♘d7 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 h4 is very much the same.

18 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 19 ♗xe6

After 19 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 20 ♗e2 ♔xe7 21 ♖xc5 ♖ac8 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♔d2 g5 the hemmed-in bishop starts to breathe.

The text-move involves an exchange sacrifice, justified by the activity of the white pieces and the wayward black bishop.

19...♘d3+ 20 ♔e2 ♘xc1+ 21 ♖xc1 ♔xe7 22 ♗h3 f5

White's surveillance of the critical squares d7 and c8 could not be tolerated, all the more so because 23 exf6+ ♔xf6 24 ♖c7 ♗f8 does not worry Black so much.

23 ♖c7+ ♔e6

23...♖d7 24 ♖c6 ♗f8 (otherwise White plays 25 ♗xf5) 25 g4 is not an appealing alternative for Black.

24 ♖c6+

It makes sense for White to avoid the exchange of rooks after 24 ♖xh7 ♖h8, considering the exposed position of the black king and the enduring problem of the h6-bishop.

24...♔d7 25 ♗g2!

It's the right moment to engage the light-squared bishop again.

25...♖ac8 26 e6+ ♔e8 27 ♗b6 ♗g7?

Black is on the brink of defeat and does not have time to make counter-threats. His best chance was simplification into an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops by 27...♖xc6 28 ♗xc6+ ♔e7 29 ♗xd8+ ♔xd8, although 30 b4 continues to harass him.

28 b4 ♗c3

It is too late for the counter-sacrifice now that the queenside pawns have been blockaded on light squares.

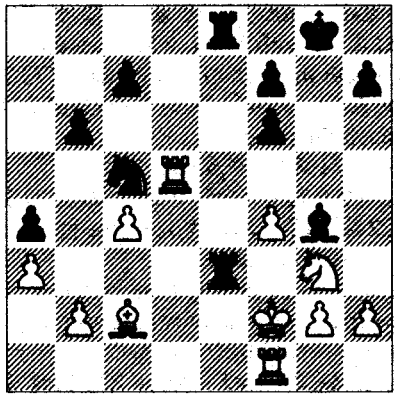
29 ♗c5 ♗f6

Unfortunately, the planned 29...♖d2+ 30 ♔e3 ♖cd8 proves to be a blank shot after 31 ♗f1 ♖d1 32 e7.

30 ♖xa6 ♗e7 31 ♗c6+ ♔f8 32 ♖a7 ♗xc5 33 bxc5 ♖xc6 34 e7+ ♔e8 35 exd8♕+ ♔xd8 36 ♖xh7

White has obtained a won rook endgame.

W



I. Sokolov – Van der Wiel
Amsterdam 2001

Black's pawn-structure has been damaged, but he threatens 23...♖e2+ and it seems he can consolidate the position. However, things deteriorated for Black rapidly:

23 ♖xc5! bxc5 24 ♗xa4

The knight was holding the position together. With the knight eliminated, the cumbersome position of Black's rooks and bishop has been accentuated.

24...♖8e6

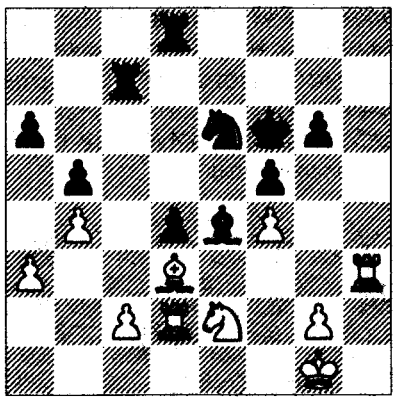
No better is 24...♖8e7 25 h3 ♗c8 26 ♖d1.

25 h3 ♗e2 26 f5! ♖6e5 27 ♖e1 ♖xg3 28 ♔xg3 ♗xc4 29 ♖xe5 fxe5 30 f6!

The idea behind White's 26th move: the black king is imprisoned. The simplification has brought about a new phase in which the active white king and the passed a-pawn represent a decisive advantage. The game concluded:

30...♗d5 31 ♗d7 ♗e4 32 h4 h5 33 ♔f2 ♔h7 34 ♔e3 ♗xg2 35 ♗f5+ ♔h6 36 a4 ♗b7 37 a5 1-0

B



Matanović – Korchnoi
Hamburg Echt 1965

The game was adjourned here. Korchnoi, having obtained a clear spatial advantage and strong pressure on the passive white set-up, did not have to think long before producing a beautiful exchange sacrifice:

41...♖c3!

Black forces his opponent's hand by threatening simply 42...♖xa3.

42 ♘xc3 dxc3 43 ♖d1

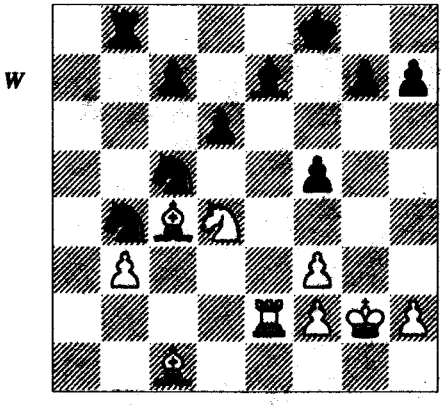
43 ♖f2 does not work due to 43...♗xd3 44 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 45 cxd3 ♘d4, when the passed pawn will be costly indeed.

43...♘xf4 44 ♖h7 ♗xd3 45 ♖c7 ♘e6 46 ♖c6

It might appear that White has chances again due to this pin. Of course, 46 ♖xc3 ♗e4 is hopeless for White.

46...♗e4! 47 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 48 ♖xd8 ♔e5!!

The point of the sacrifice: the c3-pawn survives, but not the c2-pawn. Black's path to victory from here is simple.



Fine – Keres
Amsterdam AVRO 1938

27 ♗d2?

White obviously believed that by threatening 28 ♗xb4 he just postponed retaking the f5-pawn. However, events took a different course:

27...d5!

As if unaware of the threat, Black willingly 'falls for it'.

28 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 29 ♘c6

In case of 29 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 30 ♘c6+ ♔d6 31 ♘xb4 dxc4 32 bxc4 ♘d7 the c4-pawn will fall owing to the active black king.

29...dxc4!

If White counted only with 29...♖b6, then he was mistaken. By sacrificing an exchange, Black creates a dangerous pawn duo on the queenside.

30 ♘xb4 cxb3 31 ♘d5 ♘d3!

This is strong indeed! It indirectly protects the bishop (32 ♘xe7 ♘f4+), while supporting the pawn advance.

32 ♖d2 b2 33 ♖d1 c5

33...♘c1 is also good.

34 ♖b1 c4 35 ♔f1 ♗c5 36 ♔e2 ♗xf2 37 ♘e3 c3!

Simple but beautiful.

38 ♘c2

38 ♔xd3 ♗xe3 39 ♔xc3 ♗c1 paralyses the rook for good.

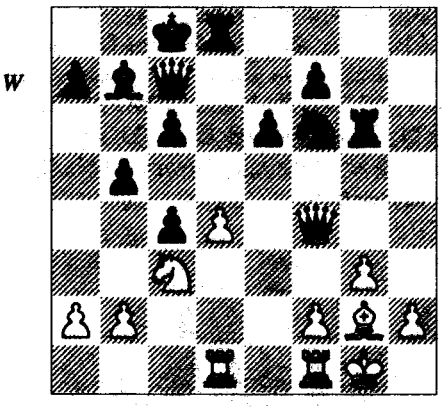
38...♘e1

Black's simplifying exchange sacrifice has brought about this won endgame.

39 ♘a3

39 ♘xe1 ♗xe1 40 ♔d3 ♗d2 offers White no realistic chances

After the text-move, Black played 39...♗c5? and went on to win eventually, but 39...♗h4 would have sealed the win in more convincing fashion.



Pogorelov – Vera
Seville 2001

Here we have a typically complex Botvinnik Semi-Slav. White now chose a move that was intended to paralyse Black's queenside play.

19 ♕f3

White considered it important to prevent Black from becoming more active on the queenside, where he possesses a potentially dangerous pawn-majority. Surprisingly, however, Black did not heed the warning...

19...b4! 20 ♘a4 c5!

At the cost of a pawn (which he loses with check!) Black goes in for a drastic reduction of material. What does he get for it?

21 ♕xb7+ ♕xb7 22 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 23 ♘xc5+

In view of the clumsy knight on the edge of the board, 23 dxc5 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♔c6 followed by 25...♔b5 is not a real option for White.

23...♔c6 24 ♖fe1

Considering the game continuation, 24 f4 comes into consideration, but that can be met either by 24...♘d5 or 24...♖gg8 (25 f5 e5).

24...♖g5

We see now the point of the pawn sacrifice. A dangerous, mobile pawn-majority has been created on the queenside, while the king's rook has been activated on the fifth rank to be used against the shaky d4-pawn.

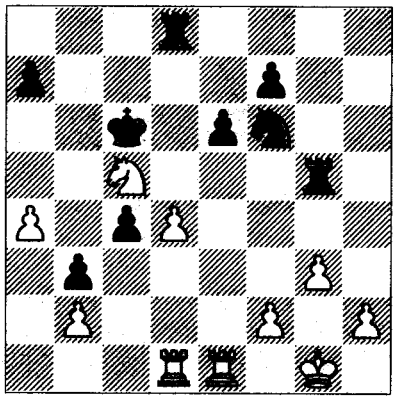
25 a3

24 ♖fe1 was probably played to make 25 ♘e4 possible, but 25...♘xe4 26 ♖xe4 ♖a5 convinced White to abandon the idea.

25...b3 26 a4 *(D)*

Some annotators have blamed this move for White's defeat and claim that 26 ♖c1 (threatening 27 ♘xb3) 26...♔b5 27 a4+ ♔b4 28 f4 ♖gd5 29 ♘a6+! ♔a5 (if 29...♔xa4, then 30 ♖a1+ ♔b5 31 ♘c7+) 30 ♘c5 ♖xd4 (30...♔b4? 31 ♘a6+) 31 ♘b7+ ♔b4 32 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 33 ♖e2 gives White a clear advantage. However, 33...♖d3! puts it in question.

B



26...♖xc5! 27 dxc5 ♖xd1 28 ♖xd1 c3! 29 bxc3 ♔xc5

The second sacrifice reduced material further and transformed the position utterly. The passed b-pawn cannot be held without major loss.

30 ♖d8

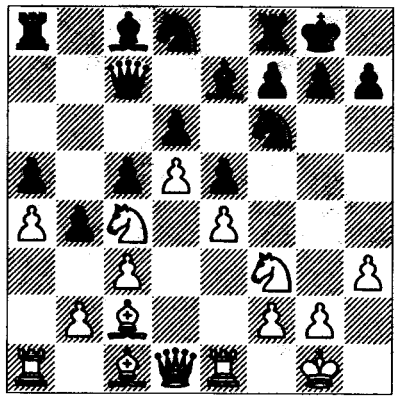
No better is 30 ♔f1 ♘e4 31 ♔e1 ♔c4 32 ♖d8 b2 33 ♖b8 ♔xc3 34 h4 ♘c5 35 ♖xb2 (otherwise 35...♘b3) 35...♔xb2 36 h5 ♘d7 37 h6 ♘f8 38 ♔d2 a5, etc.

30...♘d5 31 ♖b8 ♘b6 32 ♖d8 ♘xa4 33 ♖c8+ ♔b5 34 ♖b8+ ♘b6 35 ♖d8 ♘d5 36 ♖b8+ ♘b6 37 ♖d8 ♘d5 38 ♖b8+ ♔c4 0-1

Nicely conceived and nicely carried out.

Sometimes as early as the opening it is possible to sense a superior endgame in the distance. Possessing an uncanny feeling for the position, some players lead the play unmistakably towards the endgame. At the end of the struggle you have that powerful impression of an invisible but mighty hand directing the play unwaveringly through exchanges and simplifications.

W



Capablanca – Vidmar
New York 1927

Hardly out of the opening, Capablanca entered a long line of simplifying moves:

16 ♘fxe5! ♗a6 17 ♗b3 dxe5 18 d6 ♗xd6 19 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 20 ♘xd6

The positive effect of the exchanges is outlined in the superior pawn-structure and the bishop-pair which will soon come to the fore. The active white pieces, especially the d6-knight and the b3-bishop, act in harmony.

20...♘b7?!

Further exchanges cannot improve the innate shortcomings of the pawn-formation; on the contrary! 20...♘e6, therefore, is better.

21 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 22 cxb4 cxb4 23 f3 ♖fd8 24 ♗e3

It has become perfectly clear that the black queenside pawns, placed on dark squares, will fall prey to this bishop. A couple of moves further into the game the threat will be carried out.

24...h6?!

24...♖d6 is better.

25 ♖ed1 ♗c6 26 ♖ac1 ♗e8 27 ♔f2 ♖xd1 28 ♖xd1 ♖c8 29 g4

29 ♗b6 is premature due to 29...♘d7. The threatened h4 and g5 forces Black into desperate decisions...

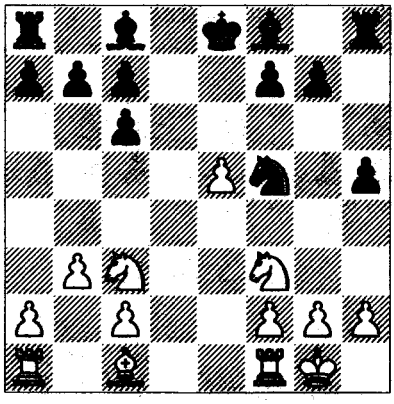
29...♗d7 30 ♗b6 ♗e6

Or 30...♖a8 31 ♗c7.

31 ♗xe6 fxe6 32 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 33 ♗xd8 ♘d7 34 ♗xa5 ♘c5 35 b3 ♘xb3 36 ♗xb4 ♘d4 37 a5 1-0

A recognizable thread goes all the way from 16 ♘fxe5 to 32 ♖d8+. The consistent reduction of material emphasized the superiority of the white pawn-formation and so each exchange represented a step nearer to victory.

W



Karpov – Miles
Biel 1990

In the Berlin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, Kramnik's later weapon in overthrowing the world champion, Miles has just played 10...h7-h5. Aware of the potential of White's kingside pawn-majority, Black takes steps to curb its advance. At the same time, by securing the retreat of the f5-knight to h6 he facilitates the development of his queen's bishop. Unfortunately, the move lastingly weakens the g5-square, a shortcoming which in my opinion outweighs the positive sides of the move.

11 ♖d1 ♗e7 12 ♗g5!

If we imagine the position with all the pieces exchanged off, White would win the pawn endgame on the basis of his pawn-majority on the kingside (due to the doubled c-pawns, the black majority on the other wing lacks mobility to match it). White's general plan is deduced from the fact: a gradual process of exchanging pieces leads him towards the final aim. We see now why the exchange of bishops, made possible by 10...h5, is in harmony with that general plan. Note also that the exchange weakens the dark squares c5 and g5.

12...♘h6 13 h3 ♗f5 14 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 15 ♘d4 ♖ad8 16 ♖d2 ♗g6

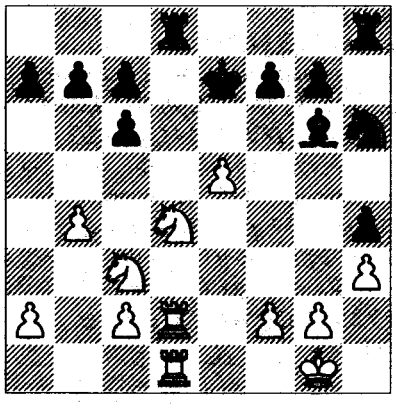
16...♗xc2 does not work due to 17 ♘xc6+, while 16...c5 fails to 17 ♘d5+. However, although apparently not so active as the text-move, 16...♗c8 looks to me more useful.

17 ♖ad1 h4?!

Black was flirting with ...♗h5 at some point, but having prepared 17...♘f5, there was no reason to postpone it, especially not by potentially exposing the h-pawn. In case of the mistaken 18 ♘ce2 he would strike by 18...♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 c5 20 ♘b5 ♗xc2. White would have to choose between 18 ♘de2 ♖xd2 19 ♖xd2 ♖d8 20 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 21 ♘f4 ♘e7 22 e6 or 18 ♘f3 ♖xd2 (or 18...h4 19 ♘e4) 19 ♖xd2 ♖d8 20 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 21 ♘e2; this is certainly less than what White gets in the game.

18 b4! *(D)*

B



By keeping Black's queenside pawns immobile, White strengthens his position in the centre.

18...♘f5 19 ♘ce2 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4

Further simplification brings White a step nearer the goal. While the black pawns are immobilized, White has opened the way for f4, which demands that Black play ...f6, leading to further simplification.

20...f6

Note that 20...♖d5 would be answered by 21 c4 (21 f4 ♖hd8) 21...♖xe5 22 ♘f3 ♖e4 23

♖d7+ ♔f6 24 ♖xc7 ♖xc4 25 ♖d6+ ♔f5 26 ♖xb7.

21 exf6+ ♔xf6?!

21...gxf6 22 c3 ♖d5 is stronger.

22 ♘b3!

Threatening ♘a5; White pushes forward step by step.

22...♖xd2 23 ♖xd2 b6 24 ♖d7 ♖c8 25 ♖d4

Separated from its base, the h4-pawn finally becomes the target.

25...♗xc2

25...♔g5 26 ♖g4+ ♔h5 27 ♖c4 would not help Black.

26 ♖xh4 ♖e8 27 ♖f4+ ♔e5

Worse is 27...♔g6 28 ♖c4 ♖e1+ 29 ♔h2 ♗e4 30 ♘d4 ♗d5 31 ♖c2 ♖a1 32 ♘xc6 ♖xa2 33 ♘e7+ followed by 34 ♖xc7.

28 ♖f7 ♗xb3 29 axb3

White is finally winning material, but rook endgames always leave hope for the defender.

29...♔d4 30 ♖xg7 ♔c3 31 ♖xc7 ♔xb4

31...♔xb3 32 ♖xc6 ♔xb4 does not change things for the better.

32 ♖xc6

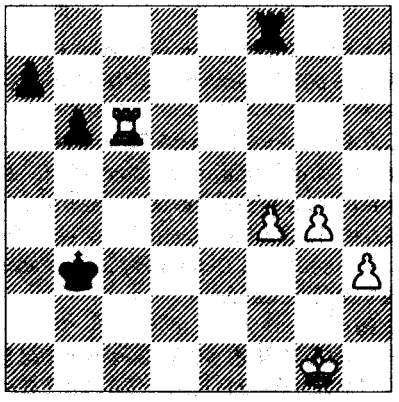
32 ♖xa7 would just facilitate the advance of the black pawns.

32...♔xb3 33 f4 ♖f8

Karpov considers this weak and gives 33...b5! 34 ♖a6 ♖a8 35 f5 ♔c4 36 f6 b4 37 f7 b3 38 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 39 f8♕ ♖a1+! 40 ♔h2 b2 with a draw. However, instead of the weak 34 ♖a6? White continues 34 f5; for example, 34...a5 35 f6 a4 36 g4 a3 37 g5 a2 38 ♖a6 ♖f8 39 h4! (but not 39 g6? ♖xf6! 40 g7 a1♕+) 39...♔b2 40 h5 a1♕+ 41 ♖xa1 ♔xa1 42 g6 b4 43 g7 ♖g8 44 ♔h2 b3 45 f7 and White is quicker.

34 g4! *(D)*

B



This move must have been a surprise. However, with passed pawns free to run on both wings, time is the crucial factor. Now after 34...b5 there is 35 ♖a6, entering the line demonstrated by Karpov, but with White a priceless tempo up.

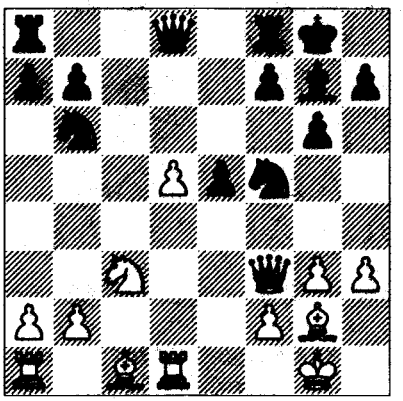
34...♖xf4 35 g5 b5 36 g6 ♖f8

36...♖f5 is inadequate due to 37 h4 ♖f4 38 h5 ♖h4 39 ♖c5.

37 g7 ♖g8 38 ♖c7 a5 39 h4 a4 40 h5 a3 41 h6 a2 42 ♖a7 ♔b2 43 ♔f2 b4 44 h7 ♖xg7 45 h8♕ 1-0

It has been a long way from the kingside pawn-majority to this relentless pawn advance, but it has been characterized by impressive strength of will and consistency.

W



Van Wely – Leko
Wijk aan Zee 2001

16 d6 ♖b8

It appears that the passed pawn will be in danger as soon as a later ...♘d4 closes the d-file and cuts off the rook's support. However, White had seen further.

17 ♕d3!

The advanced pawn needs immediate defence, but as we shall see the main point is something else.

17...♘d4

In case of 17...a6 there is 18 ♘e4 ♘d4 19 ♗g5 f6 20 ♗e3.

18 ♘b5! ♘d7 19 ♘xd4 exd4 20 ♗d2

This simple developing move takes care of the passed pawn.

20...♖e8

20...♘c5 (or 20...♘e5 21 ♕b5) 21 ♕b5 ♕xd6 22 ♗f4 ♗e5 23 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 24 b4 would cost Black material, while 20...♗e5 is useless in view of 21 ♖ac1.

21 ♖ac1 ♕f6 22 ♗b4 ♘e5?!

Considering the strength of the passed pawn, Black had to eliminate it at all cost. 22...b6 23 ♖c7 ♘c5 should therefore be preferred, although 24 ♕c4 ♖f8 (otherwise 25 ♖xf7) 25 ♖xa7 ♕xd6 26 ♗d5 ♕f6 27 ♖e1 keeps the pressure.

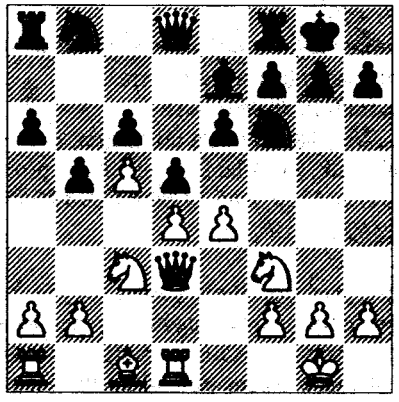
23 ♕xd4! ♘f3+ 24 ♗xf3 ♕xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 26 d7 ♖ed8 27 ♗d6

The exchange that Black grabbed has proved expensive.

27...♖a8 28 ♖c7 ♗b6 29 ♖xb7 ♔g7 30 ♖xb6 axb6 31 ♗xa8 ♖xd7 32 ♗e5+ 1-0

Again with great consistency, all the effort was put behind the passed pawn, whose significance in the middlegame grew with each move. The process of simultaneous material reduction strengthened the pawn until it forced decisive material gains.

B



Kramnik – Morozevich
Dortmund 2001

When White played 11 c5, he must have considered 11...b4 12 e5 bxc3 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕xc3, which preserves the grip on the centre, but he also had to accept the following simplifying exchanges which seem to neutralize White's opening ambitions completely. Yet...

11...dxe4 12 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 13 ♕xe4 ♕d5 14 ♕xd5 cxd5

14...exd5 would cede the open file to White.

15 ♗f4 ♘c6

Note that in case of the preventive 15...f6, White would continue 16 ♗xb8 followed by 17 ♖e1.

16 ♘e5!

Relying on his superior pawn-formation, White plays consistently for a better endgame.

16...♘b8

16...♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 f6 18 ♗f4 ♔f7 19 ♖e1 gives White pleasant play, while 16...♖fc8 17 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 does not build a fortress due to 18 a4 b4 19 a5.

17 ♖d3!

While vacating the back rank for the queen's rook, the king's rook increases its mobility on the empty rank. Sooner or later the doubling of rooks may become useful.

17...♖c8

For instance, 17...f6 18 ♘f3 ♔f7 (or 18...♘c6 19 ♖e1 ♔f7 20 ♖de3 ♘d8 21 ♗c7) 19 ♗xb8 ♖fxb8 20 ♖e1 a5 21 ♘d2 is pleasant for White.

18 ♖e1 ♗f6?!

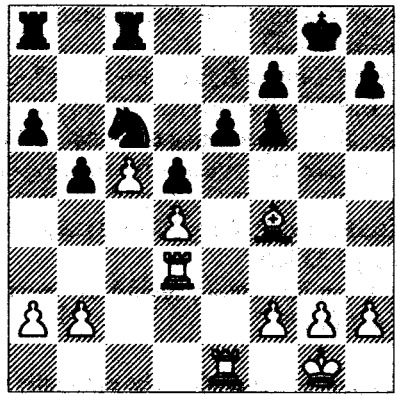
Black has repeatedly avoided weakening e6, but judging from the course of the game 18...f6 19 ♘f3 ♔f7 20 ♖de3 ♖c6 was a better solution.

19 ♘g4 ♘c6

After 19...♗e7, 20 ♖ee3 would develop an initiative on the kingside. Thus Black finally got his knight on c6, but at the price of a damaged king's position.

20 ♘xf6+ gxf6 *(D)*

W



21 ♗g3

Not so difficult to find, but a fine move; the f6-pawn will be harassed from h4, provoking its weakening advance.

21...♔g7?!

The alternative against ♗h4 was 21...h6, giving some breathing space to the king; then 22 ♗h4 can be met by 22...f5. Although 22 ♗f4 ♔h7 23 ♖ee3 keeps the pressure up, it was a lesser evil.

22 ♗h4 ♘e7 23 g4!

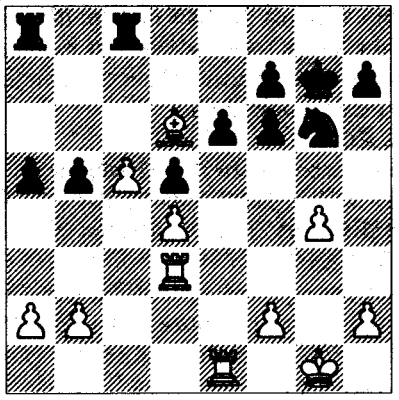
The battle spreads to the kingside, where White's forces are stronger.

23...♘g6

23...h5 is insufficient because of 24 ♖f3! hxg4 25 ♖f4.

24 ♗g3 a5 25 ♗d6 *(D)*

B



While placing the e7-square under surveillance, White simultaneously vacates the third rank and opens the way for a pawn advance.

25...h5

Aware of the stifling effect of 26 ♖h3, Black fights for freedom, but this cunning attempt proves inadequate.

26 gxh5 ♘h4 27 ♖g3+ ♔h6 28 ♗e7 ♘f5

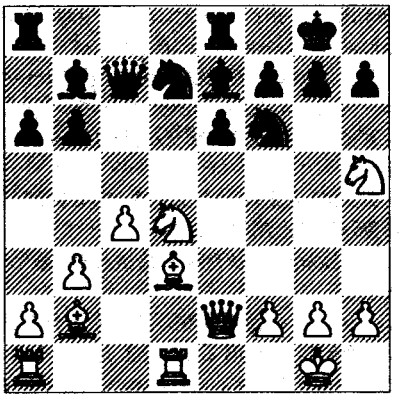
28...♖g8, by threatening 29...♘f3+, would still complicate the winning procedure, although it does not essentially change the situation on the board.

29 ♗xf6 ♘xg3 30 fxg3 ♖g8 31 ♔g2 ♔xh5 32 h3 ♔g6 33 ♖f1

Black can do nothing against the inevitable pawn advance.

Reduction of material can be especially helpful in beating back attacks. As the attacking force is slowly chipped away by exchanges, the defence gains strength and in the long run it may eventually prevail. A good example is provided by the game Stein-Flohr, Ukrainian Ch (Kiev) 1957, which can be found in my book *Secrets of Positional Chess*. The following game is also characterized by this process of gradual reduction of material, which eventually led to the refutation of the sacrificial idea.

W



Kasparov – Karpov
Amsterdam 1988

White's spatial advantage and actively posted pieces tempted him into an unclear knight sacrifice:

16 ♘xe6?!

Courageous, no doubt, but on the evidence of further events a risky enterprise.

16...fxe6 17 ♕xe6+ ♔f8

17...♔h8 18 ♕f7 sets up a latent pin on the seventh rank, and Black cannot avoid problem; for instance 18...♘xh5 19 ♕xh5 ♘f8 20 ♕f7 or 18...♗f8 19 ♘xf6, etc.

18 ♗xh7

White has won three pawns for the knight and forced the enemy king into a precarious position (mate in two is threatened). However, the mass of black pieces defending the king now generates strong counterplay.

18...♘c5!

A nervous attempt to parry the mate threat at once by 18...♕c6 does not seem wise on account of 19 ♘f4 ♕xe6 20 ♘xe6+ ♔f7 21 ♘g5+ ♔f8 22 ♗g6, threatening to lift the rook to the h-file. However, 18...♗c5 19 ♕f5 ♖e2 looks sufficient to keep the balance. However, by activating his queen's knight, Black justly seeks more.

19 ♕h3 ♘xh7

Black starts the healthy reduction of material. The threat of ♗g6 must be eliminated. At

the same time further simplifications favourable to Black are provoked in case of 20 ♘xg7 ♗f6 21 ♘xe8 ♖xe8.

20 ♗xg7+

20 b4!? is a serious alternative, based on the idea of penetrating on d7, and also gaining the e6-square for the queen. Then:

a) 20...♘e6 loses to 21 ♘xg7.

b) 20...g6 is Kasparov's cold-blooded recommendation in *Informator*. Then:

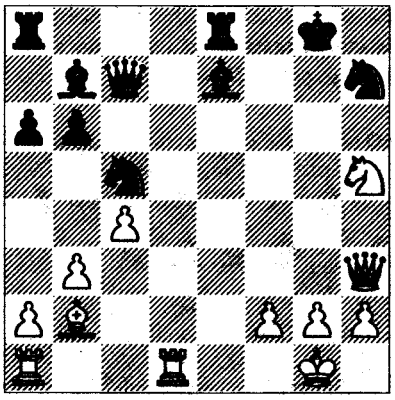
b1) Kasparov's analysis continued 21 ♘g7 ♗f6 22 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 23 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 24 bxc5 ♕xc5, when the simplification suits Black; his king is shielded well by the knight and the g6-pawn.

b2) He also mentions 21 bxc5, claiming that 21...♘g5 gives Black a clear advantage, but this fails to 22 ♕c3. That can be repaired by 21...gxh5 22 ♕f5+ ♗f6 23 ♗xf6 ♕f7.

b3) However, 21 ♕c3! is stronger.

c) Therefore Black must resort to 20...♗f6 21 ♘xf6 gxf6 22 bxc5 ♖ad8.

20...♔g8 21 ♗b2 *(D)*



B

21...♕c6!

The line-up of queen and bishop exerts lasting pressure on g2, and prevents White from doing the same on the long dark-square diagonal. At the same time Black is ready to parry 22 ♕g4+ (or 22 ♕g3+ ♘g5 23 h4 ♘ce4) by 22...♗g5 23 h4 ♕xg2+ 24 ♕xg2 ♗xg2, when the disappearance of the white attacking units brings complete respite.

22 ♖d4 ♘e4

Just in time to strengthen the defence and cut White's communication along the fourth rank.

23 ♖e1 ♘eg5 24 ♕g4 ♗a3!

In trying to use all his resources in attack, White has forgotten about his back rank. This brilliant tactical stroke should have decided the struggle at once. White's reply is forced.

25 ♗c3 ♖xe1+?

After 25...♗b2!! there is no reprieve for White. Black's counterattack, based on gradually chipping away at the attacking force, would have reached its goal. Unfortunately, under time-pressure, Black missed his chance and the game finished in a series of mutual errors.

26 ♗xe1 ♖e8 27 ♗d2 ♗c1?!

27...♗c5 is logical.

28 h4 ♗xd2 29 ♖xd2 ♖e1+

Here Black should play 29...♕e4.

30 ♔h2 ♖e4?

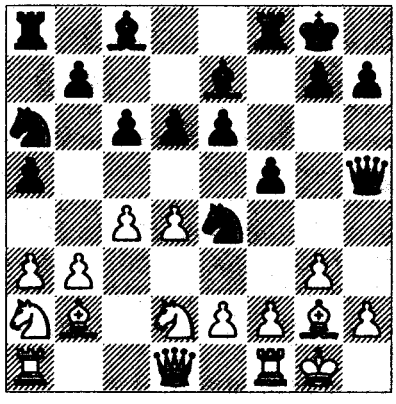
Now 30...♕c7+ is best.

31 f4 ♕e6?

31...♗c8 was called for, relying on 32 ♕g3 ♕e8 or 32 ♖d8+ ♖e8, consistently sticking to maximum simplifications possible.

32 ♖d8+ ♔f7 33 ♖d7+ ♔f8 34 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 35 hxg5

and this time the simplification favoured White.



B

Kotov – Sokolsky
Moscow (Chigorin mem) 1947

In the opening White passed through moments of insecurity and hesitation, which a connoisseur of the Dutch will recognize in the strange position of the white knights. Black's reaction, logical and consistent with the basic idea of the variation, will be recognized as well.

13...e5!

The pawn sacrifice is offered in order to free the queen's bishop and attack. Perhaps we could not say it is routine, but the idea is known in similar circumstances.

14 ♘xe4 fxe4 15 ♗xe4 ♗g4

The first palpable achievement: now 16 ♖e1 is impossible due to 16...♖xf2, and White is forced into an undesirable weakening of his kingside. The king's defender, the light-squared bishop, remains exposed in the centre.

16 f3 ♗h3 17 ♖f2 exd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘c5 19 ♘c3 ♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 d5!

The sacrifice has generated an initiative, and Black now opens the position.

21 g4!

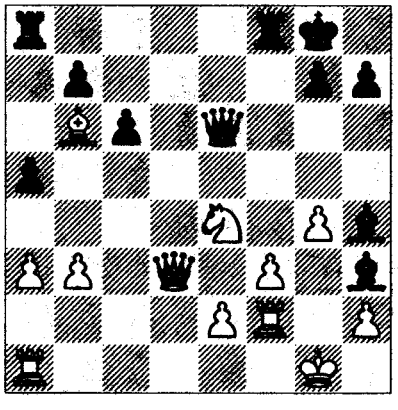
Before capturing on d5 White shuts the light-squared bishop out of play. Although it somewhat weakens the king's position, the positive effects are more valuable.

21...♕f7 22 cxd5 ♕xd5 23 ♗b6

Feeling the heat, White offers simplifications through 23...♗xg4 24 ♕xd5+ cxd5 25 fxg4 dxe4. It's the course Black should take, but carried away by the initiative he has been riding since 13...e5, Sokolsky seeks blood.

23...♕e6? 24 ♕d3 ♗h4 *(D)*

W



25 ♕c4!

At a point when Black's attack seems to have overcome the defence, White simplifies into an endgame. It will cost him an exchange, but it is worth it.

25...♕xc4 26 bxc4 h5 27 gxh5!

27 ♘g3 is not the only option; fortunately, because 27...hxg4 28 f4 ♖a6 29 ♖b1 ♗e7 is good for Black.

27...♗xf2+ 28 ♔xf2 ♗e6

If 28...♖ac8, then 29 ♘d6 ♖e6 30 c5, probing the queenside pawns. Then the continuation 30...♖h6 31 ♘xb7 a4 32 ♘a5 cannot satisfy Black.

29 ♖g1!

The doubled, apparently worthless h-pawn becomes important; there is no good way to parry h6. The counter-sacrifice, either overlooked or underrated by Sokolsky, starts to pay off.

29...♗xc4 30 h6 g6 31 ♖xg6+ ♔h7 32 ♖d6 ♖f5 33 h4 ♖g8 34 ♗e3

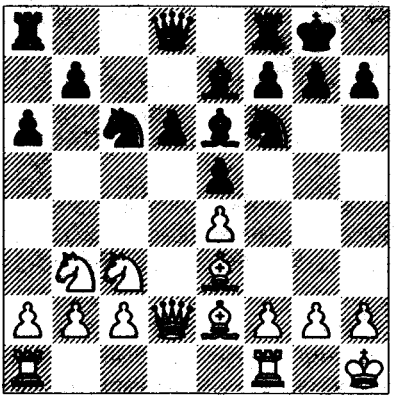
Black was ready to give back the exchange, but White cannot be bought off so cheaply.

34...♖g6 35 ♖d7+ ♖f7 36 ♖d8 ♖xh6 37 ♗xh6 ♔xh6 38 ♘d6 ♖f4 39 ♔g3 1-0

When the queens were exchanged and the game reached an endgame with rooks and minor pieces, Black lost his momentum and the wind blew into White's sails.

However, the process of material reduction is a rather sensitive matter and one should be on the alert when the occasion presents itself: it does not always favour the inferior side. The road of simplifications is a slippery road more often than is generally believed.

B



Short – J. Polgar
Budapest 2003

By including 9 ♔h1 in his opening plan, White failed to prevent the apparently natural and strong freeing central thrust. Black concluded it was her best chance...

11...d5 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♖fd1 ♗xb3

14...♗e6 15 ♘c5 also leads to further simplifications which do not seem very promising for Black.

15 axb3 ♕xd2 16 ♖xd2 ♖ad8 17 ♖ad1 ♖xd2 18 ♖xd2 ♖d8

The series of exchanges have transformed the nature of the position fundamentally, but some details suggest that Black's opening difficulties have not been solved. The queenside pawn-majority, potentially mobile and supported by the white bishop-pair, as well as the lasting weakness of the b6-square, tell in White's favour.

19 ♗d3

There is not much sense in artificially preserving the pair of rooks. 19 ♖xd8+ looks to me a more natural solution.

19...g6 20 c3 a5

Obviously, b4 must be prevented and the mobility of the pawn-majority checked as long as possible.

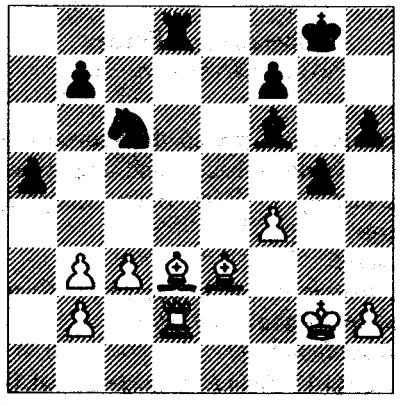
21 f3 h6

This looks like a good idea since 22 ♗xh6 g5 23 h4 is well met by 23...e4! 24 fxe4 ♘e5, but as a means of further simplifications, as we shall see, it is of little use. 21...♔g7 is more natural.

22 g3 ♗g5 23 f4 exf4 24 gxf4 ♗f6 25 ♔g2 g5?! *(D)*

Black consistently seeks simplifications, but the continuing difficulties call in question this policy. In my view 25...♔g7 is again better.

W



26 ♗c4 ♖e8 27 ♖e2 gxf4 28 ♗xf4 ♖xe2+ 29 ♗xe2 ♔g7?!

25...g5 could be justified only by the consistent 29...♗g5, although 30 ♔f3 keeps the better chances.

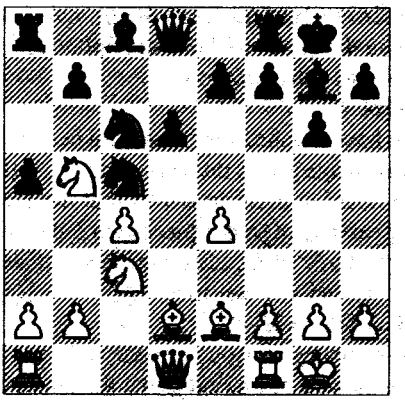
30 ♗g4 ♗g5 31 ♗c7

Now the counter-threat 31...♗c1 obviously comes too late and Black is forced into passive defence.

31...♗d8 32 ♗g3 ♔g6 33 ♗c8 b6 34 ♔f3 f5 35 ♗d7 ♘e7

White is clearly better. His active bishop-pair and the constant threat of his king penetrating into Black's camp guarantee good winning chances. The road of simplifications chosen by Black proved long, arduous and mistaken.

B



Bologan – Motylev
Russian Cht (Togliatti) 2003

Making use of the weakness at b5, White has just carried out a very useful manoeuvre – ♘a3-b5, strengthening his defence and cramping Black at the same time. Apart from b5, he commands another important square, d5, and plans to place the d4-square under full control by ♗e3. His spatial advantage is not in question. In such a situation of limited options one would expect 12...a4, with 13 ♗e3 ♕a5 in mind. However, Black thought he should make use of d4 before it was too late.

12...♘d4?! 13 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♗h6 ♗g7 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♗g4

Building on the dubious logic of his opponent, now it's White who follows in the same direction of simplifications – and at the right moment, before the light-squared bishop moves to its natural position at c6.

16...♗xg4 17 ♕xg4 a4 18 ♕e2

A pair of knights and two pairs of bishops have been exchanged. To Black's relief? No, to

his obvious detriment. In spite of the simplifications, or rather greatly owing to them, White's spatial advantage and sounder pawn-structure are emphasized.

18...♕a5 19 ♖ac1

Given that c4 is the only point in White's position against which pressure might be organized, this is sound, but 19 e5!? would be most unpleasant for Black (then 19...a3 fails to produce results due to 20 ♘b5!).

19...♘d7 20 ♘d5 ♘f6

Further simplifications are necessary. The white knight perched on d5 cannot be tolerated.

21 ♖fd1 ♘xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕a6

At a6 the queen will be out of play. 22...♕c7 comes into consideration.

23 h4

We have reached the moment when the spatial advantage grows into an initiative. A glance at the board suffices to tell us that the gradual disappearance of minor pieces has led to White having a huge space advantage, accentuated by the kingside pawn advance.

23...♖fc8 24 h5 e6

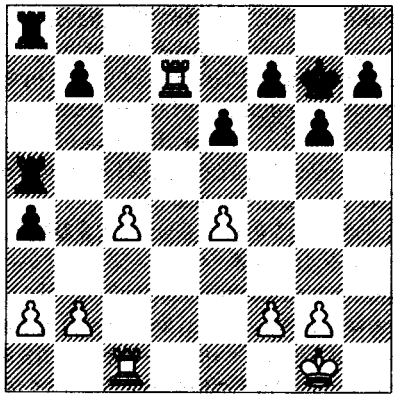
This creates a lasting weakness in the form of a backward pawn, but given the threat of 25 e5, his options are limited. If 24...♖c5, for example, then 25 ♖xc5 dxc5 26 ♖d1 grabs the open file. Perhaps 24...f6 should be considered.

25 ♖d4 ♖c5 26 ♕d2 ♖xh5

Black defends the best he can; he cannot afford to allow h6+.

27 ♖xd6 ♕a5 28 ♕xa5 ♖hxa5 29 ♖d7 *(D)*

B



29...♖5a7?

This attempt to safeguard the second rank backfires owing to its passivity. 29...♖b8 is imperative; for instance, 30 ♖c7 (otherwise ...♖c5) 30...b6 31 ♖d1 (or 31 ♖c3 ♖c5 32 ♖a7 b5 33 ♖f3 ♖f8) 31...♖c5 32 ♖dd7 ♖xc7 33 ♖xc7 ♖d8 34 ♖b7 ♖d1+ 35 ♔h2 ♖d2 36 ♖xb6 a3.

30 c5 b5 31 ♖d6

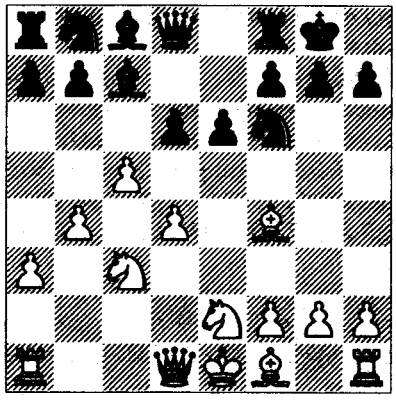
Thus the back ranks have been defended but at the cost of a powerful enemy passed pawn. Naturally, White avoids the exchange of a rook-pair, as this would significantly ease the defence.

31...♖b8 32 f4 ♔f6 33 ♔f2 g5 34 g3 ♖c7 35 ♔e3

The centralized king soon joins the pawn in its advance and makes the final difference. Black is lost. The rest was hopeless...

35...gxf4+ 36 gxf4 ♖g8 37 ♖c2 ♖g1 38 e5+ ♔f5 39 c6 ♖g3+ 40 ♔d4 ♖f3 41 ♖d7 1-0

B



Scherbakov – Evseev
Russian Ch (Samara) 2000

White has just played the provocative 10 ♗c1-f4, inviting exchanges and simplifications. Threatened by 11 ♘b5, Black accepted the challenge...

10...dxc5

The waiting 10...a6, preparing 11...♘c6, is a good alternative to consider.

11 dxc5 ♘c6?!

11...♗xf4 12 ♘xf4 e5 is more logical, opening the way for the c8-bishop.

12 ♕xd8 ♗xd8 13 ♗d6 ♗e7 14 ♖d1 ♗xd6

14...♖d8 is stronger.

15 ♖xd6 ♘e5?

At the end of a series of imprecisions there comes this highly dubious move, which blocks

his normal development for a while. 15...e5 is an obvious necessity. Black instead accepts his passive position.

16 ♘d4 ♗d7 17 f4 ♘g6 18 g3 e5 19 fxe5 ♘xe5 20 ♗g2!

As a result of the opening exchanges, White has achieved an obvious spatial advantage and has an effective pawn-majority waiting for its moment to advance. This will provide superb compensation for the exchange sacrifice to which this move commits White.

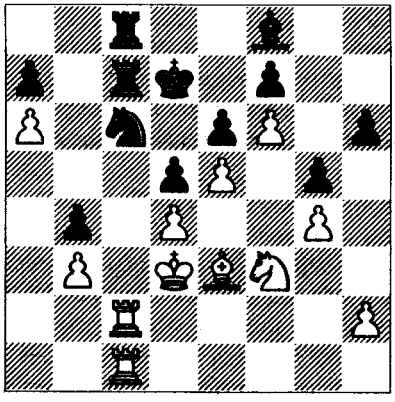
20...♘c4 21 ♖xf6

Necessary, but obviously planned and strong. White's compensation is huge, especially because after the capture of the b7-pawn the white pawn-majority can advance freely.

21...gxf6 22 ♗xb7 ♖ae8+ 23 ♔f2 ♘e5 24 ♔g2 h5 25 c6 ♗c8 26 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 27 ♘d5 ♖cd8 28 ♘e7+ ♔h7 29 ♘ef5 ♖d5 30 ♖c1 ♘g4 31 ♖c5 ♖xc5 32 bxc5 1-0

The passed pawn cannot be stopped without major loss of material. This time the simplifications carried out by Black were a disaster.

B



Anand – Shirov
Leon adv (1) 2000

Black spent quite a lot of time moving his king to d7. Upon achieving his aim, he must have been relieved to be able to engage White on the queenside, and continued:

30...♘a5?!

As a matter of fact, if he waited passively, he would have been confronted with the same difficulties on the poorly defended kingside, but not in such a drastic manner.

31 ♖xc7+ ♖xc7 32 ♖xc7+ ♔xc7 33 ♘xg5!

To expect some defensive move was a vain hope, as the exchanges have clarified White's task. He is relying on his kingside pawns.

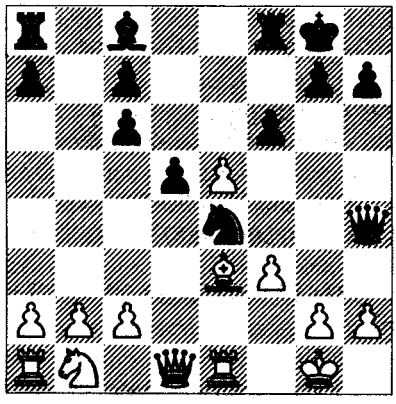
33...hxg5 34 ♗xg5 ♘xb3 35 h4 ♘a1

A bizarre move, but not senseless. In case of the careless 36 h5 there is 36...b3 37 ♗c1 ♗h6!, when Black paralyses the passed pawns. As a matter of fact, going for the a6-pawn is obviously too slow. Although inadequate, 35...♘a5 is somewhat better.

36 ♗c1 ♘b3 37 ♗e3 ♘a5 38 g5 ♘c4 39 ♗c1 1-0

Exchanging rooks provided water for White's mill. In simplifications, like in anything else in the game of chess, there is no safety. Special attention should be paid to the timing of simplifications.

B



Marshall – Lasker
New York Wch (1) 1907

White hoped that his 13 f3 would clarify the situation in his favour, but he was in for an unpleasant surprise.

13...fxe5! 14 fxe4 d4

The king's weakness makes it difficult to keep the extra material without consequences. Thus 15 ♗d2? (15 ♗c1? loses to 15...♕f2+ 16 ♔h1 ♗g4) 15...♗g4 16 ♕c1 ♖f2! threatens 17...♖xg2+ with mate, when Black's superiority on the kingside decides. The best policy, therefore, was to give back the material at once. However, one is always reluctant to face the hard facts, and the tendency is to hang on to the material for too long.

15 g3?!

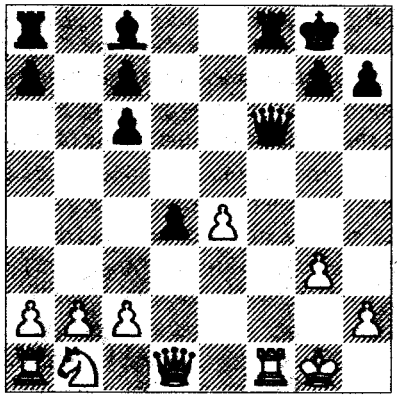
Chasing the queen only increases the pressure against the weak complex of light squares around the king.

15...♕f6 16 ♗xd4?

Finally White understands that he must part with his material surplus; he loses quickly after both 16 ♗c1 ♕f2+ 17 ♔h1 ♗g4 and 16 ♗d2 ♕f2+ 17 ♔h1 ♗h3 18 ♖g1 h5! (Réti). However, returning the material by 16 ♕e2 is better.

16...exd4 17 ♖f1 *(D)*

B



The forced simplifications apparently save White, but it soon proves to be just another mirage.

17...♕xf1+ 18 ♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 19 ♔xf1 ♖b8 20 b3 ♖b5!

Suddenly White's backward development tells, and the superior active black pieces seize a decisive initiative.

21 c4

Réti pointed out 21 ♘d2 ♖h5 22 ♔g2 (note that 22 h4 would be spoilt by 22...g5) 22...♖c5 23 ♖c1 ♗a6, threatening 24...♗d3.

21...♖h5 22 ♔g1 c5 23 ♘d2 ♔f7 24 ♖f1+ ♔e7 25 a3 ♖h6 26 h4 ♖a6 27 ♖a1 ♗g4 28 ♔f2 ♔e6 29 a4 ♔e5

White's position is untenable.

The transition into an endgame heavily favoured Black. Note that, if taken in time, there was a remedy for White's later woes. The solution was an early counter-sacrifice, but psychological reasons often seem to be too strong a barrier against it.

Some of the most important cases of material reduction occur in the endgame itself. It's a natural process based on the fact that lower types of endgames often represent an easier nut to crack. However, that large field would require separate exploration and this would distract us from our main focus of interest in this book.

Having examined the nature of the pseudo-sacrifice and the risks involved in sacrifices, we move on to the second and most important aspect of material transformations, the real sacrifice.

6 Real Sacrifices

As we progress in our chess career we develop a feeling for nuances. We learn to be satisfied if the return on our investment is small, as long as it is useful and the risk not too great. We sacrifice with modest expectations. Our aim is neither a winning attack nor a large material win. We seek compensation of various kinds and we speak of positional sacrifices in which the fruit remains rather vague. Compensation is the crucial word. It's an essential characteristic of a positional sacrifice. It can take many forms and it is definitely not limited to material for material. It may be manifested in the elimination of some strong enemy feature or in the support of one's own strong piece, in the damage done to the opponent's pawn-structure, in the strong squares created in it, in counterplay, etc.

We have a strong feeling that a positional sacrifice springs from the fundamental features of a certain position. It takes sound positional judgement and deep assessment of the position to weigh the positive and the negative on the sensitive scales of the positional sacrifice. We learn that material advantage may turn into a mirage, if the opponent obtains strong compensation in space or time and, therefore, we measure material against time and space. Many a time the initiative seized by a material sacrifice is not so strong as to overrun the defence or make decisive material gains. What we get is just a promising but still unclear attack or a spatial advantage. The result of the metamorphosis – material into initiative – remains vague and we speak of a 'real sacrifice'. What makes a real sacrifice difficult, psychologically and practically, is the fact that, as a rule, the opponent's replies are not as compulsory as in pseudo-sacrifices. There the danger lurks.

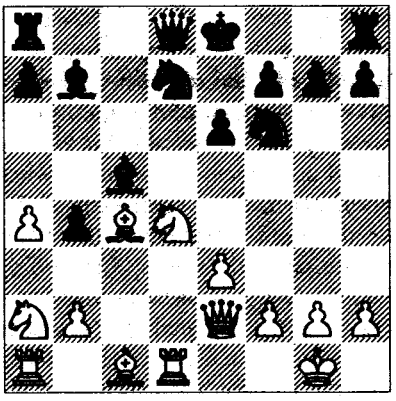
Real sacrifices happen in all stages of the game. In the opening they are more prudent, because the positions are still basically balanced and no wild risks are tolerable. The advantage has not shifted to one or the other side in a significant measure and one is cautious with one's investments; sacrifices of large amounts of material would not be appropriate. A pawn, for example, is worth a couple of developing tempi or some strong positional feature, but it is a relatively small investment at a moment when the equilibrium has not been compromised. That is why we often encounter pawn and exchange sacrifices in the early stages, intended to destabilize the situation, to start an attack, to seize a spatial advantage, or perhaps to accentuate some positional advantage. In the middlegame, sacrifices are not limited to small fry – they range from pawn to queen sacrifices, with various goals to fulfil. The motifs are richer, the advantages more emphasized, be it in the form of a large spatial advantage or a strong initiative. Leaving the middlegame behind, we sacrifice to bring about a better endgame. They often involve a transition to a simpler position or are a way to beat back the opponent's attack. These, too, are mostly real sacrifices.

Each time we sacrifice material we take risks. We give up something real and we get in compensation something unclear. The risk involved is obvious whenever a complex and far-reaching evaluation is called for. Of course, if the final target is clear and obviously attainable, the positional sacrifice remains a pseudo-sacrifice as well. However, in general it is characterized by enduring uncertainties and often vague compensation. The risks and fears are therefore real.

Summing up, we could say that in comparison to the pseudo-sacrifice, the real sacrifice is not a more or less instantaneous metamorphosis, but a process initiated by the material offer. Its character is unforcing and the direction, therefore, unpredictable. Its analysis tree has many side-variations and the course unclear. In short, it's a risky affair, an act of intuition rather than of calculation. The long series of examples from master practice that we are about to examine shows this convincingly. We shall start with instructive examples from the carrier

of Grandmaster Alexander Kotov. They all deal with pawn sacrifices carried out in the early phase. Some of them may be regarded as borderline cases between pseudo- and real sacrifices.

W



Kotov – Szily
Moscow – Budapest 1949

In this variation of the Slav, White's problem is his queen's knight. It is sidelined on a2, and it will take a couple of tempi to bring it into battle via c1. White was in no mood to acquiesce to this slow, unpromising process and he decided to act more energetically:

13 e4!?

Relying on the pressure exerted on the d-file (especially on d7, which can be increased by ♗b5 at any moment), White seeks to speed up the development of his queen's bishop. So after 13...♗xe4 14 ♗g5 the pressure against the king stranded in the centre becomes palpable, while 14...0-0? does not work due to 15 ♘xe6.

13...♘xe4?

Disregarding the sensitive position of his king and the latent pressure on d7, Black accepts the sacrifice. This was an ill-advised step, allowing White to develop a very strong initiative, based on a series of tactical threats.

14 ♗e3!

The knight sacrifice on e6 still keeps Black from castling. He is obliged to invest another precious tempo in sheer survival.

14...♕e7

14...♕b6 exposes Black to 15 ♗b5 0-0-0 16 a5 with a strong attack. Closing the open file by 14...♘d6 prevents 15 ♗b5, but the blow hits from the other side: 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 17 ♕h5+, etc.

15 ♗b5

The pin is unpleasant.

15...♗xd4

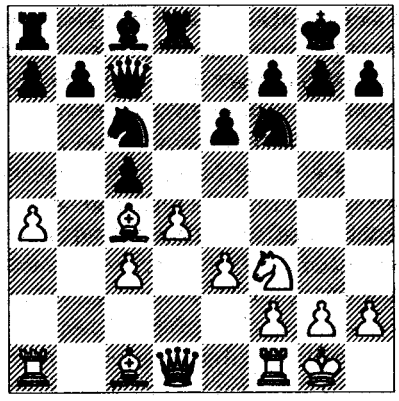
Black can't castle on either side: 15...0-0 16 ♘f5, or 15...0-0-0 16 ♘c6. Trying to diminish the pressure on d7 by 15...♘d6 fails to 16 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 (or 16...♔xd7 17 ♘f5 exf5 18 ♕b5+) 17 ♘b5.

16 ♖xd4 ♘ec5 17 ♖ad1 ♗c8 18 ♕f3 ♖b8 19 ♘xb4 ♖b7 20 ♘c6

Black has managed to save the piece, but at the cost of a rueful lack of development and coordination. This soon ends in disaster...

20...♕f8 21 ♖d6 ♖xb5 22 axb5 ♘b7 23 ♖6d2 1-0

W



Kotov – Matanović
Saltsjöbaden/Stockholm IZ 1952

Black has just brought his rook to d8, threatening to win a pawn. White replied calmly:

12 ♗a3

I surmise that he guessed his opponent's thoughts and was ready to indulge his wish...

12...cxd4?

We shall soon feel that showing restraint by 12...b6 would have been wiser.

13 cxd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♕xc4 15 ♗e7!

The point of the sacrifice: while Black is still undeveloped, damaging the king's position will open it up for attack.

15...♖d5

The passive 15...♖e8 is worse: 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕g4+ ♔h8 18 ♕h4.

16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕f3!

To 17 ♕g4+ Black would answer 17...♖g5, but now in case of 17...♔g7 18 ♕g4+ the defence on the fifth rank is ruled out because the black queen hangs with check. Then 18...♔h8 19 ♕f4 forces the weakening 19...f5, when 20 ♕h6 prepares 21 f4 and the rook-lift.

17...♗d7

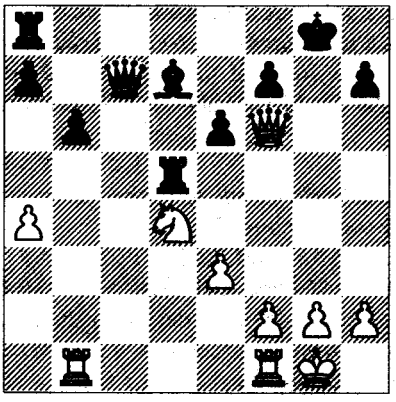
17...e5 would lose the rook to 18 ♖fc1. 17...f5 again weakens the king's position, which can be exploited by 18 ♕g3+ ♔h8 19 ♖fc1 ♕b4 20 ♘b5, catching the rooks and the queen in a peculiar geometrical situation. Under the circumstances, finishing development seems most reasonable.

18 ♕xf6 ♕c7 19 ♖ab1

Black is ready to meet 19 f4 with 19...♕d8, but this apparently slow approach creates lasting threats. The a4-pawn is taboo because 19...♗xa4 20 ♖b4 would lift the rook into the mating attack via the fourth rank. At the same time the freeing ...♕d8 is delayed.

19...b6 *(D)*

W

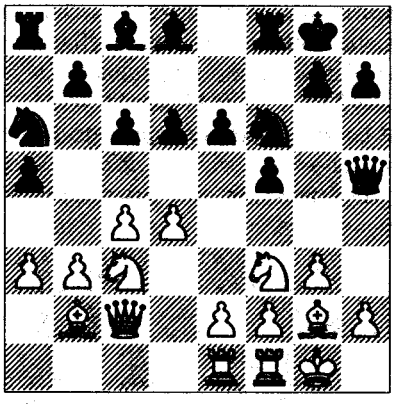


Note that as a by-product of the pressure on the b-file, the black bishop now loses its secure foothold on c6.

20 ♘f3 ♕d8 21 ♕f4 ♖c8 22 e4 ♖a5

The sacrifice has paid off nicely: the material balance has been established while Black suffers from a feeble, unprotected king. Now 23 ♘e5 f6! 24 ♘xd7 (if 24 ♘g4, then 24...e5) 24...♕xd7 25 ♕xf6 ♖f8 26 ♕h6 ♖xa4 27 ♖b3, as the game continued, simplified into a major-piece endgame in which the vulnerable position of the black king eventually told in White's favour. However, 23 ♖fd1 ♕e7 24 ♘e5 ♗xa4 25 ♖d3 f6 (25...♖f8? 26 ♕h6!) 26 ♘g4 would have done the job quicker.

W



Flohr – Kotov
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1949

White now played:

13 e4

He had in mind 13...♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 fxe4 15 ♕xe4, when Black would have a poor pawn-formation and passive pieces. Black's bold and thematic response demonstrates he was alert to the dangers of such a structure.

13...e5! 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘c5

Black has given up a pawn to activate his pieces, starting with the wayward knight, and to increase the pressure on the e4-pawn. At the critical moment of transition into the middlegame it was a beneficial step. Black starts to breathe freely.

16 b4

Neither 16 exf5 ♗xf5 nor 16 f4 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♗f5 works for White, while the repetition of moves by 16 ♗f3 ♕h3 17 ♗g2 apparently did not satisfy him.

16...♘cxe4 17 ♘xe4 fxe4 18 c5?

At the moment, grabbing the e4-pawn would cost White an exchange. Having vacated the c4-square for a check, he is finally ready to capture it, but in doing so he surrenders the important central d5-square to the c8-bishop, which jumps at the chance! The course of the struggle suggests that the modest 18 f4 was much better.

18...♗e6! 19 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♗d5

For the second time in the game Black offers a pawn, but considering the weakness of the

light squares around the king it is a small stake in comparison with the powerful position his bishop gets on d5.

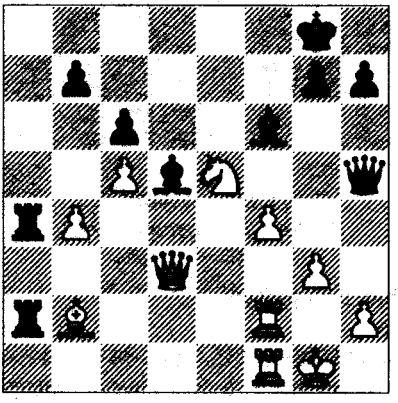
21 ♖e2 axb4 22 axb4 ♗f6 23 f4 ♖a2

In harmony with the d5-bishop, the rook on the second rank increases the feeling that the white king has become vulnerable.

24 ♖ef2 ♖fa8 25 ♕d3 ♖8a4?! *(D)*

This is somewhat over-ambitious. In view of the coming g4 advance, 25...♕h3 looks more appropriate, preventing the pawn advance.

W



26 g4 ♕h4 27 ♕f5 ♖a8 28 g5 ♕h5

A good way of keeping White's action in check, while preserving all the advantages the position offers. Now the white queen is stuck on f5, because 29 ♕d3, for example, would provoke 29...♗xe5 30 fxe5 (or 30 ♗xe5 ♖8a3) 30...♕g4+ 31 ♕g3 ♕e4.

29 h3 h6!

Black prepares to exchange on e5, and gives his king a refuge. The immediate 29...♗xe5 30 fxe5 g6? would lead to catastrophe after 31 ♕f8+ ♖xf8 32 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 33 e6+ with mate. Besides, 30 ♕g4, which would have freed White, is impeded.

30 ♘d3

Threatened by 30...♕h4, White had to do something with his knight. 30 ♔h2 ♖e8 would make the tension untenable.

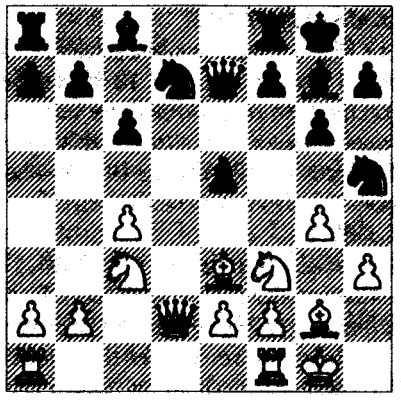
30...♗xb2 31 ♘xb2 ♖2a3 32 ♔h2 ♖e3! 33 ♖g1

33 ♕g4 is too late due to 33...♕xg4 34 hxg4 ♖aa3.

33...♗e6 0-1

The pawn sacrifice led to a mighty centralized bishop which generated the decisive initiative.

B



Aronin – Kotov
Leningrad tt 1951

White was rather naïve if he thought that the weakening 12 g4 would chase the knight back to f6 or that Black would fall for 12...♘f4 13 ♗xf4 exf4 14 ♕xf4 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♕xe2, leaving the king poorly protected against the oncoming attack by 16 ♕h6 ♕e7 17 ♖fe1 ♕c5 18 ♘g5 ♘f6 19 ♖e3. Events took quite a different turn...

12...♘f4! 13 ♗xf4 exf4 14 ♕xf4 ♘b6

Black justly sees superb compensation in the tremendous force of the fianchettoed bishop, which he would not trade for the worthless e2-pawn.

15 ♘d2

15 ♖ac1 ♕b4 leads to further passivity and loss of coordination.

15...♗e6 16 ♖ac1 ♖ad8 17 b3?!

Considering the awkward position of the white pieces, insisting on defending the c4-pawn increases White's difficulties. 17 c5 ♕xc5 18 ♘de4 is a better try.

17...f5!

The defence of the d2-knight depends on the queen, which suddenly becomes exposed and that in turn endangers the knight.

18 gxf5

18 g5 does not work due to 18...♖d4 19 ♕e3 f4 and so White is compelled to open the position.

18...♖xf5 19 ♕e3 ♗d4 20 ♕h6

20 ♕g3 ♖g5 would allow Black to combine the hunt for the d2-knight with an attack on the white king.

However, the defensive thread on the c1-h6 diagonal is thin and can be severed...

20...♕c7

20...♗e5 would do so at once, winning at least an exchange. However, taking into account the sensitive position of not only the knight and the queen but also the king, Kotov justly asks for more.

21 ♘f3

White seeks salvation in tactical complications because 21 ♗f3 ♗g7 22 ♕e3 ♖c5 leads to the loss of the h3-pawn and an untenable position.

21...♖h5! 22 ♘xd4 ♗xh3 23 ♘db5

23 ♕e3 loses to 23...♗xg2, while the queen sacrifice by 23 ♕xh5 gxh5 24 ♗xh3 ♖xd4 cannot succeed. Thus only further sacrifices kept the game going for a while.

23...cxb5 24 ♘xb5 ♕c8 25 ♕e3 ♗xg2 26 ♔xg2 ♕g4+ 27 ♕g3 ♕e4+

By hunting the queen and the knight, Black has caught the king in the open. The play is channelled straight towards the end.

28 f3

28 ♕f3 loses to 28...♖g5+ 29 ♔h3 ♕e6+ 30 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 31 ♔h3 ♕g7.

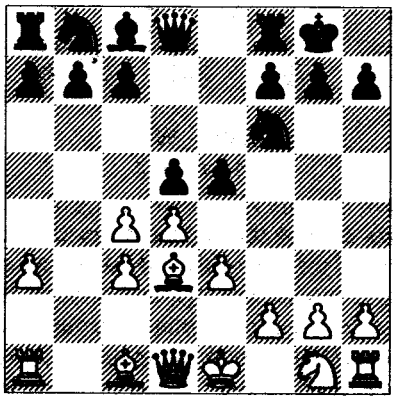
28...♕xe2+ 29 ♕f2

Or 29 ♖f2 ♕e3.

29...♕e5 30 ♖h1

Or 30 f4 ♕e4+ 31 ♕f3 ♖d2+ 32 ♔g1 ♕f5, with a decisive attack.

30...♕g5+ 0-1



Kotov – Lilienthal
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1944

By 7...e6-e5 Black was seeking a quick tactical solution. 8 dxe5 dxc4 9 exf6 cxd3 10 fxg7 ♖e8 can hardly satisfy White. On the other hand, after 8 cxd5 e4 9 ♗c2 ♕xd5 the wedge on e4 is there to stay. Ignoring this somewhat artificial pressure on the pawn-centre, White continues to develop, offering a pawn sacrifice.

8 ♘e2 e4 9 ♗c2 dxc4 10 ♘g3 ♖e8 11 0-0 c5 12 f3!

We now understand the idea behind the sacrifice. By eliminating the pawn wedge on e4, White manages to free his central pawns. As soon as they advance, the hitherto hemmed-in bishop-pair will spring to life.

12...cxd4 13 cxd4 exf3 14 ♕xf3 ♕d5

If it were not for the threatened 15 ♘h5, 14...c3 would be more appealing.

15 ♕f4

The exchange at d5 would also set in motion the central pawn unit, but hoping for a central breakthrough and considering the awkwardly posted black pieces, White prefers to keep the queens on the board.

15...♘c6?!

15...c3 would at least complicate White's plan.

16 ♗b2 ♘h5?!

In view of what is coming, Black should prefer 16...♕a5 17 ♘e4 ♖xe4 18 ♗xe4 c3 19 ♗c1 ♗e6.

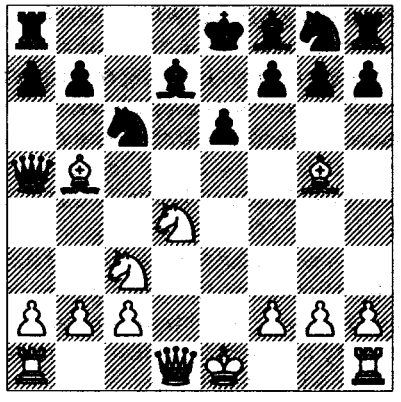
17 ♕h4 g6 18 ♘xh5 ♕xh5 19 ♕f6 ♕d5 20 e4 ♕e6 21 ♕f4 ♘d8 22 ♔h1

Having avoided the check from b6, White is ready to play d5, when the weakness of Black's dark squares starts to play the decisive role. Black is helpless. When following the pawn sacrifice his pawn-centre fell apart, the huge energy of the central white pawns and bishop-pair were released and were finally transformed into a direct mating attack.

Looking back at Kotov's games, we recognize a similar pattern in all of them. A pawn was offered for quite concrete positional compensation. Also, they led to similar and rather predictable results. We have a feeling that they belong at least partly to that large grey zone of borderline cases between the pseudo-sacrifice and the real sacrifice.

At least for their fluttering ease one might ascribe to the same zone a couple of the following examples...

B



Tal – Uhlmann
Moscow 1971

This position arose in the Tarrasch French.

9...♗b4?! 10 0-0

It is clear that White's lead in development is the issue. Uhlmann picked up the gauntlet...

10...♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♕xc3?

When so obviously behind in development, accepting the pawn sacrifice looks extremely risky even at a glance. 11...a6 was proposed as a remedy, when both players went along in their assessments as far as 12 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♘xc6 ♕xg5 14 ♕d6, when 14...♘e7 is refuted by 15 ♖fd1! ♘xc6 16 ♕d7+ ♔f8 17 ♕xb7 ♖e8 18 ♕xc6 winning material, while after the stronger 14...♘h6 15 f4 (15 ♖fd1 is no longer good due to 15...bxc6) 15...♘f5 (if 15...♕f6, blocking the king's exit, then again 16 ♖fd1) 16 ♕c7 ♕f6 17 ♕xb7 0-0 18 ♖f3 (Uhlmann) White keeps the advantage owing not only to his pawn surplus, but also to the mighty knight limiting counterplay (in passing: 18...♘h4 19 ♖d3). However, there is also 14...♕d5 looking for the saving straw in the endgame after 15 ♕xd5 (if 15 ♕g3, then 15...♘f6) 15...exd5 16 ♖fe1+ ♔f8; e.g., 17 ♘b4 ♘f6 18 ♖ad1 ♖e8. However, stronger is 17 ♘d4 ♖c8 (if 17...♘f6, then 18 ♖ab1 b5 {or 18...♖b8 19 ♘c6} 19 a4 bxa4 20 ♖b7) 18 ♖ab1 ♖c7 19 ♖b6.

Unfortunately, it seems that the continuation given by Uhlmann is the best Black could squeeze out of a difficult position. What happened in the game was much worse.

12 ♘f5!

The energy accumulated in the development advantage explodes in the form of this crushing attack channelled by its sheer force right to the end.

12...exf5

Exercising restraint by 12...♕c5 does not help because of 13 ♘d6+ ♔f8 14 ♘xb7! ♕xg5 (or 14...♕xb5 15 ♕xd7 ♕xg5 16 ♕xc6) 15 ♕xd7 ♕xb5 16 ♘d6.

13 ♖e1+ ♗e6 14 ♕d6 a6

14...♘f6 15 ♖ad1 just increases the pressure.

15 ♗d2!!

Beautiful! The e7-square is well defended, but the f8-square is not.

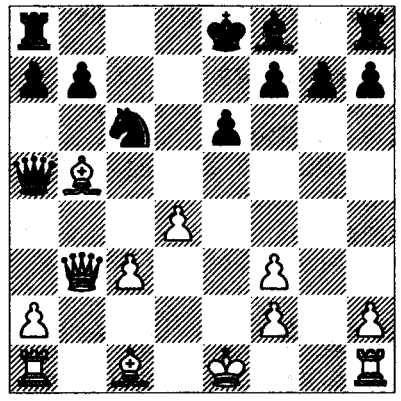
15...♕xc2 16 ♗b4 axb5 17 ♕f8+ ♔d7 18 ♖ed1+

A necessary detail: the king is pushed into the mating-net.

18...♔c7 19 ♕xa8 1-0

Against 20 ♖ac1 and 21 ♕d8# Black could only give up the other rook, but it would be a pointless doggedness.

W



Alekhine – Winter
London 1932

Black missed the right path in the Panov variation of the Caro-Kann and at the end of the opening phase he was lagging behind in development. In order to accentuate the opponent's weakness, White struck in the centre:

12 d5! exd5 13 0-0

Alekhine's intention is as obvious as it is effective: to prevent Black from castling kingside and oblige him to castle queenside, where the king will be exposed to attack from the active white major pieces.

13...0-0-0

Black has no choice, given that 13...♗e7 does not work due to 14 ♖e1.

14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♖b1 ♕c7 16 ♕a4 ♖d7 17 ♗d2!

While Black is still worrying about how to develop his kingside, White is ready for the final assault: he threatens 18 c4.

17...♗c5 18 c4 ♔d8

18...♗b6 is inadequate because of 19 c5 ♗xc5 20 ♕a6+ and the queen is gone.

19 ♗a5

19 ♖fe1 ♖e8 favours Black, while 19 ♕a6 lets the king slip to the other wing.

19...♗b6 20 ♗xb6 axb6 21 ♕a8+

After 21 cxd5 ♖xd5 22 ♖fd1 ♔e7 the king runs out of the danger zone.

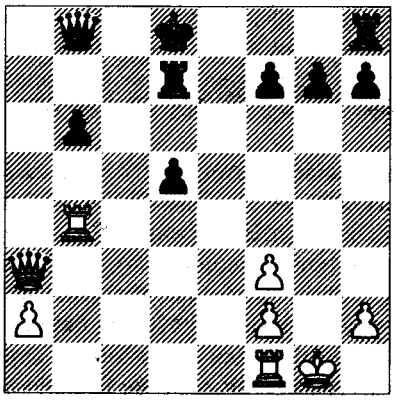
21...♕c8 22 ♕a3

Keeping the king in the centre is strictly consistent with the pawn sacrifice.

22...♕b8 23 cxd5 cxd5

No better is 23...♖xd5 24 ♖fd1 ♖e8 25 ♖xd5+ cxd5 26 ♖d1 ♕e5 27 f4 (Alekhine).

24 ♖b4! *(D)*



An effective solution. It enables White to double rooks, while simultaneously preventing Black from bringing his king's rook into play.

24...♕d6

24...♖e8 would be punished by 25 ♖a4.

25 ♖e1

By cutting off the king's escape-route, White keeps the h8-rook out of play.

25...♖c7

25...♖e7 would not help Black: 26 ♕a8+ ♔d7 27 ♕b7+ ♔e8 28 ♖bb1 wins.

26 ♕b3 ♖e8

The rook comes in finally, but at the cost of a pawn and further exposure of the king.

27 ♖d1 ♖e5 28 ♖xb6 ♖c6 29 ♖xc6 ♖g5+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xc6 31 ♖e1

Although the material has been reduced, owing to the secure position of the white king the attack goes on with undiminished strength. White threatens 32 ♕b8+ chasing the king out in the open, while the black rook is again out of play and of no help.

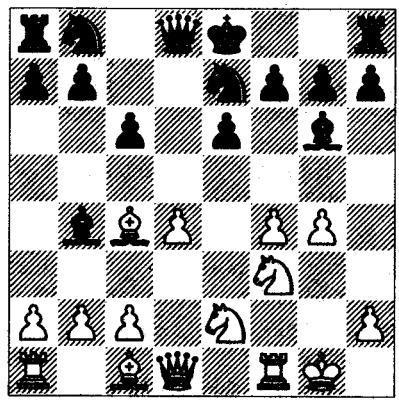
31...♕f6

31...♕d6 32 ♕b7 ♖e5 33 ♖c1 would make no difference.

32 ♕b8+ ♔d7 33 f4 ♖g6 34 ♕e8+ ♔c7

Or 34...♔d6 35 ♖c1.

35 ♖c1+ ♔b6 36 ♖b1+ ♔c5 37 ♕b5+ 1-0



Smirin – Kagansky
Israeli Ch (Tel Aviv) 2002

Feeling the heat on the kingside and before castling, Black decided to clarify the situation by rather doubtful means:

10...h5?!

There follows a classic case of a pawn sacrifice for the initiative.

11 f5! exf5 12 gxf5 ♗xf5 13 ♘e5 0-0 14 ♗g5

14 ♘g3 is also possible, but the text-move is the natural choice, as it increases White's lead in development while pinning on e7 and putting strong pressure on the f7-pawn.

14...♕c8

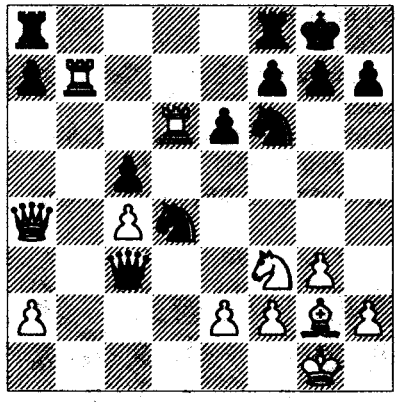
14...♗e6 hardly comes into consideration due to 15 ♗xe6 (worse is 15 ♘xf7 ♕c8) 15...fxe6 16 ♘f4.

15 c3 ♗d6 16 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 17 ♘f4 b5

Just one of the bad moves left at Black's disposal. 17...♗g4 loses to 18 ♘fg6, 17...♘d7 to 18 ♘fg6, and 17...♗d6 to 18 ♘xf7.

18 ♘fg6 ♗g5 19 ♕xh5 ♗e3+ 20 ♖f2

and the threats could not be parried any longer.



Karpov – Polugaevsky
Biel 1990

In entering this position, it was clear that White was offering a pawn, since 17 ♘xd4 loses to 17...♕e1+ 18 ♗f1 ♘e4.

17 ♕d1 ♘xf3+

Black is ready to take up the offer, although 17...♖ad8 makes his life easier.

18 ♗xf3 ♕xc4 19 a4

If White tried to regain the pawn by 19 ♖c7 he would come across 19...♘e8, but the natural pawn advance combined with the pressure from White's active pieces fully compensates for the pawn.

19...a5 20 ♖b5 ♖a7?

As if hypnotized, Black clings to his fragile material advantage and weakens his back rank. Giving back the material by 20...♘d5 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 ♖xd5 ♖fc8 23 ♖bxc5 ♕xc5 24 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 would provide hope for a draw. The punishment is quick.

21 ♖d8 g5 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♕d6+ ♔g7 24 ♖xc5 ♖d7

The alternative 24...♕xa4 loses to 25 ♖xg5+ ♔h6 26 ♕d2!.

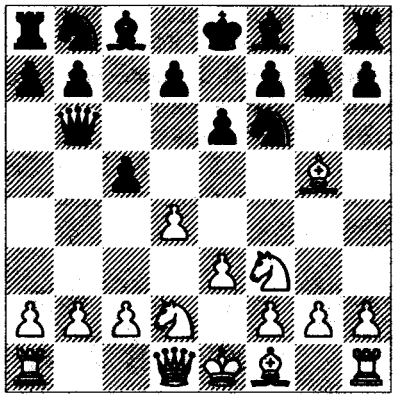
25 ♕e5 ♕b4 26 ♕xg5+ ♔f8 27 ♖c8+ ♔e7 28 ♔g2

and Black was lost. The pawn sacrifice was just temporary, but Black's erroneous assessment led him into the abyss.

However, pawn sacrifices often involve more uncertain compensation and lead to less predictable consequences.

Spassky – Osnos
USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1963/4
Torre Attack

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♗g5 c5 4 e3 ♕b6 5 ♘bd2 *(D)*



White calmly leaves the b2-pawn *en prise*. Nothing concrete stands behind this pawn sacrifice. It is offered in the belief that grabbing the pawn will cost some tempi, which, if well invested, will be transformed first into a lead in development and then into an initiative. Such decisions are not taken on the basis of any concrete calculations. They are the fruit of general experience, general feeling and general judgement.

5...♕xb2

Chess-players tend to be wary of grabbing such pawns, but it's one of those experiences which are not obvious and cannot be proved. There is always a good chance that this extra pawn at the end of the struggle could be converted into victory.

6 ♗d3 cxd4

The alternative is to retreat the queen whence it came, but in exchanging pawns Black had in mind another route of retreat.

7 exd4 ♕c3 8 0-0 d5

This time the alternative was to retreat the queen to c7 allowing c4, but keeping the central squares under surveillance by a hedgehog formation d6-e6. However, blockading the c2-pawn must have looked attractive.

9 ♖e1 ♗e7 10 ♖e3!

A powerful move with a double function: it forces the queen to retreat and it is simultaneously prepared to move along the third rank into an attack in case Black castles.

10...♕c7 11 ♘e5 ♘c6 12 c3 ♘xe5?!

It takes a dose of restraint to tolerate such a centralized knight on e5, but 12...♗d7, developing and flirting with the idea of castling queenside at some later moment, looks more reasonable.

13 dxe5

Now the central white pawn will cause disharmony and a general lack of coordination that Black would rather avoid.

13...♘g8

13...♘d7 14 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 wins another pawn, but again not without consequences: following 15 ♕h5 ♕xc3 16 ♕g5+ ♔e8 17 ♘b3 White has full compensation for the material.

With the text-move, Black looked hopefully at future events, expecting 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 or 14 ♗f4 g5 15 ♗g3 h5.

14 ♘f3

Given that 14...♗xg5 15 ♘xg5 creates new difficulties for the defence, the knight move leaves Black's minor pieces cooking in their passivity. At the same time the knight eyes its ideal destination on d4.

14...h6 15 ♗f4 ♗d7 16 ♘d4 ♗g5

The c3-pawn was untouchable: 16...♕xc3? 17 ♘xe6. The text-move is an attempt to solve Black's backward development, but it creates new weaknesses. 16...♗c5 seems to me more natural.

17 ♗xg5 hxg5 18 ♕g4 ♕xc3

18...0-0-0 came into consideration, with the intention of 19 ♕xg5 ♘h6, in which case White can proceed quietly by 20 h3, putting an end to the tactical threats to h2, but he can also continue energetically 20 c4, prying open the files leading towards the black king.

19 ♘h3 ♘h6 20 ♕xg5 ♕b4 21 ♖g3

21 ♖c1 would be met by 21...♕g4, while 21 ♕xg7 finally allows 21...0-0-0; neither possibility is very attractive to White.

21...♕f8?

Decisive errors often wait in ambush towards the end of a long suffering, when energy is not abundant and concentration falls. However, bear in mind that psychological factors like this are a typical aspect of real sacrifices. Better is either 21...g6 or 21...♕e7. After the text-move the queen's rook finally joins the battle with decisive effect.

22 ♖c1 f6

Opening the position can help only White. 22...♗c6 is somewhat better.

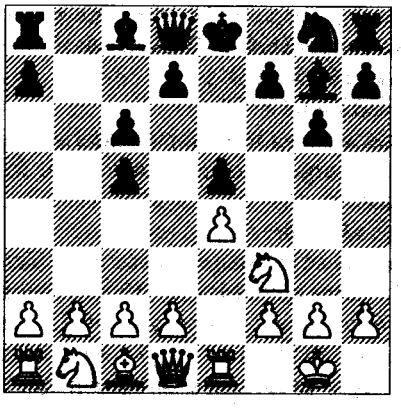
23 ♕e3 f5 24 ♘c5 f4 25 ♗g6+ ♔e7 26 ♕a3 1-0

26...fxg3 27 ♘xb7# is mate.

Fischer – Spassky

Sveti Stefan/Belgrade (11) 1992
Sicilian Defence, Rossolimo Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1 e5 *(D)*



The fact that White has castled and that Black is lagging in development behind gave rise to the sharp continuation which follows:

7 b4!

Aware of his lead in development, White is anxious to increase it by a pawn sacrifice. Removing the c5-pawn will loosen Black's grip on the centre. Besides, coming so early in the game the sacrifice is a dangerous psychological weapon.

7...cxb4 8 a3 c5

Impressed by the course of the game, some annotators looked for the critical error this early and recommended 8...b3. Spending a tempo in

order to give back the pawn seems to me neither attractive nor necessary; 9 cxb3 d6 10 d4 is advantageous to White. On the other hand, 8...bxa3 9 ♗xa3 (9 ♘xa3 is slow) 9...d6 10 d4 exd4 11 e5 opens the position quicker than Black would want and that explains the text-move.

9 axb4 cxb4 10 d4

The purpose of the sacrifice, to open the centre and seize the initiative, has been realized.

10...exd4 11 ♗b2 d6

After 11...♘e7 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♕xd4 0-0 14 ♕xb4 White's initial initiative turns into a spatial advantage, accentuated by Black's inferior pawn-structure.

12 ♘xd4 ♕d7

The apparently critical 12...♕b6 proves less of a nuisance than it seems at first. 13 ♘d2! demonstrates that White can develop at his opponent's expense: 13...♗xd4 14 ♘c4 ♗xf2+ 15 ♔h1 ♕c5 16 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 17 ♖f1 ♕xd6 18 ♕f3 f6 19 e5 would catch the king insufficiently protected in the middle of the board. The attempt to place the c4-square under surveillance by 13...♗a6? fails to the brutal 14 ♖xa6 ♕xa6 15 ♘e6!.

13 ♘d2 ♗b7?

Black's time to develop is expiring, but he misses the urgency of the situation. 13...♘e7 is essential.

14 ♘c4 ♘h6

Was this awkward move necessary? Timman in *Informator* gives 14...♘e7 15 ♘b5, but Black must have been apprehensive of 15 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 16 ♘f5 ♕xd1 17 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 18 ♖axd1. It is clear from the text continuation that Black keeps the e7-square vacant for his king; if now 15 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 16 ♘f5 ♕xd1 17 ♘xg7+, then 17...♔e7 18 ♖axd1 ♖hd8.

15 ♘f5!

The scene is set for action. Various motifs are intertwined to make the combinative solution work. Given that 15...♘xf5 loses to 16 exf5+ ♔f8 17 f6 ♗h6 18 ♕xd6+, there is not much choice...

15...♗xb2 16 ♘cxd6+ ♔f8 17 ♘xh6 f6?!

The best reply was 17...♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 ♕xd6 19 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 20 ♕xh7 ♕e6.

18 ♘df7!

A new phase of transformation: despite material equality having been restored, White's initiative gains a new impetus owing to his superior coordination and activity.

18...♕xd1 19 ♖axd1 ♔e7 20 ♘xh8 ♖xh8 21 ♘f5+!

There is no peace for the black king. This new sacrifice leads by force to a won endgame.

21...gxf5 22 exf5+ ♗e5 23 f4 ♖c8 24 fxe5 ♖xc2

Or 24...fxe5 25 ♖xe5+ ♔f6 26 ♖b5.

25 e6

The protected passed pawn guarantees that further simplifications work in White's favour.

25...♗c6 26 ♖c1 ♖xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♔d6 28 ♖d1+ ♔e5

If 28...♔c5 29 e7 ♗b5, then 30 ♖d8 a5 (30...b3 31 ♖b8) 31 ♖b8 ♗d7 32 ♔f2, etc.

29 e7 a5 30 ♖c1 ♗d7 31 ♖c5+ ♔d4 32 ♖xa5 b3 33 ♖a7 ♗e8 34 ♖b7 ♔c3 35 ♔f2 b2 36 ♔e3 ♗f7 37 g4 ♔c2 38 ♔d4 b1♕ 39 ♖xb1 ♔xb1 40 ♔c5 ♔c2 41 ♔d6 1-0

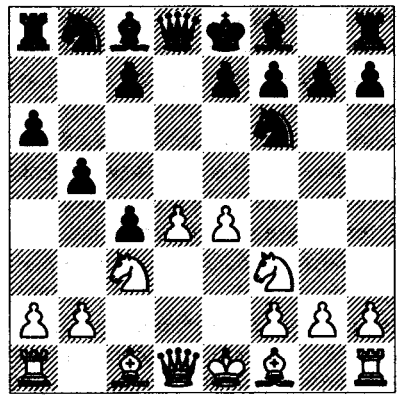
An extraordinary feat after a 20-year absence from the chess arena!

Kavalek – Miles

Wijk aan Zee 1978

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 a6 5 e4 b5 *(D)*



White sacrifices a pawn to build a full pawn-centre and then to undermine the black pawn-chain on the queenside. Although an old attempt, this idea has remained attractive to White.

6 e5 ♘d5 7 a4 ♘xc3?! 8 bxc3 ♕d5

The exchange on c3 lessened the pressure on the b5-pawn, but the pressure is still there and

Black has to do something about it. On the natural 8...♗b7 there is 9 e6, which damages the black pawn-formation and makes further development difficult. The text-move tries to do both: to parry the threatened axb5 and to prevent e6. Black appears to want more than is realistic. However, let us see what Kavalek thought about it.

9 g3 ♗b7

Lalev-Yakovich, Sofia 1988 followed similar ideas in a new version: 9...♗e6 10 ♗g2 ♕e4+ 11 ♗e3 ♕b7 12 0-0 ♗d5 (Yakovich also tries to oppose on the long light diagonal and to prevent e6, but he does not succeed) 13 e6 fxe6 (if 13...♗xe6, then 14 ♘g5 ♗d5 15 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♕g4, as in Balashov-Miles, Bugojno 1984) 14 ♘h4 with an initiative; White plans ♕h5+ or ♕g4, while in case of the exchange at g2 the knight quickly joins the fight via f4.

10 ♗g2 ♕d7 11 ♘h4!

In more distant days Bronstein played 11 ♗a3, but Kavalek's treatment of the position is based on a simple, convincing logic.

11...c6

After 11...♗xg2 12 ♘xg2 Black is facing axb5, which can be met either by 12...c6, which limits Black's development for a long time, or by 12...♕d5, where the queen stands exposed to ♘e3 or ♘f4.

With the text-move, Miles eliminates the pressure on b5, but cements the queenside in its striking inactivity.

12 f4

The kingside advance is a logical consequence of the knight's move. Before Black manages to develop, White is getting ready to strike.

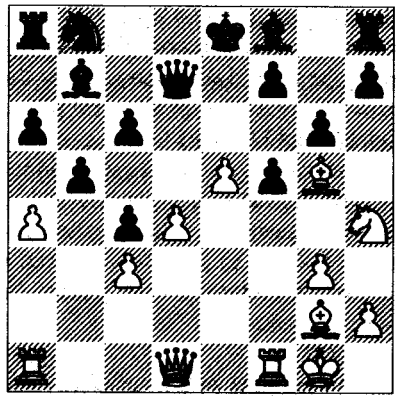
12...e6 13 f5 exf5 14 0-0 g6 15 ♗g5! *(D)*

An excellent tactician, Kavalek understands the position perfectly: the two pawns captured by Black represent insufficient compensation for the great vivacity of the white pieces.

15...♗e7

15...♗g7 is called into question by 16 ♗f6, when 16...0-0 does not work because of 17 ♘xf5 gxf5 18 ♕h5, etc. 16...♗xf6 fails as well to 17 exf6 ♕d6 18 ♖e1+ ♔f8 19 ♖e7 ♘d7 20 axb5. Miles himself felt that the solution lay in 16...♔f8. However, 17 ♕c1 poses new problems. White considers 18 ♕g5, and eyes ♕a3+ in case the a-file is opened; note that after

B



17...h6 18 axb5 Black cannot reply 18...cxb5? due to 19 e6, when the house falls apart.

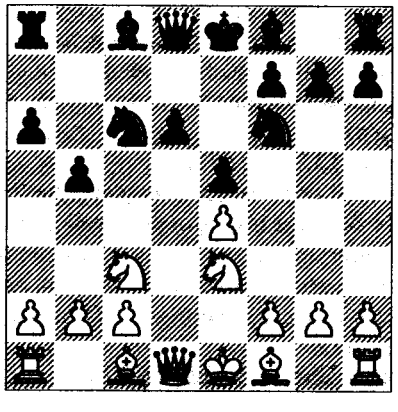
16 ♗f6 ♖g8 17 ♕d2 ♕e6 18 axb5 ♗xf6

On 18...axb5 there is 19 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 20 ♖a1 ♗b7 21 ♖a7 ♕c8 22 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 23 d5.

19 exf6 ♕xf6 20 ♖ae1+ ♔d8

The pawn sacrifice on the queenside developed a strong initiative on the kingside, which has been transformed into a strong attack. Unfortunately, the players were now in time-trouble, which severely influenced the course of the struggle. 21 ♕h6 would be difficult to meet effectively. 21...axb5 22 ♖xf5 or 21...♕g7 22 ♘xf5 hits Black hard. Short of time, Kavalek played the inferior 21 bxc6 and after several mutual mistakes ruined his fine opening play. The game thus loses further interest for us, but the instructive metamorphosis of material into initiative remains a rewarding lesson.

B



Anand – Ponomariov
Wijk aan Zee 2003

White has just activated his knight by transferring it from a3 to e3, consolidating his dominion on the central d5-square. To do that he was ready to pay a price of a central pawn.

9...b4 10 ♘cd5 ♘xe4 11 a3

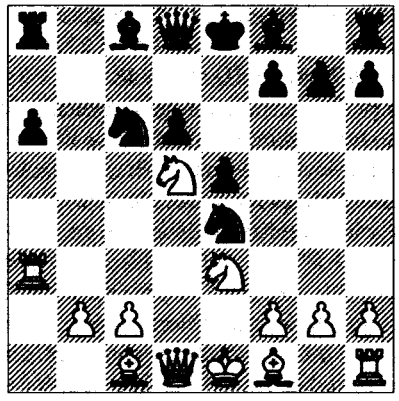
This move comes as no surprise: White liberates his queenside pawn-majority and seizes space on the queenside. The question now is whether to hold on to the extra material or to play 11...b3, trying to give a chance to the queen's knight to land on d4.

11...bxa3?!

Black is too eager to win material, and his position, which is already not so cheerful, starts to deteriorate.

12 ♖xa3 *(D)*

B



Here we can sum up the results of the sacrifice. The knights have taken a powerful grip on the centre; the queenside pawns can move forward capturing space or placing under surveillance the central squares d4, d5 and c5; the pressure on the isolated a6-pawn has grown, and White's light-squared bishop has a choice of useful posts to consider (including b5, owing to the pin).

12...g6?! 13 c3 ♗d7?!

The fatal error. In order to parry the threatened 14 ♕a4 the bishop stands well at d7, but for no other reason; especially not in combination with ...g6, because the d6-pawn is cut off from the queen's support. 13...f5 came into consideration.

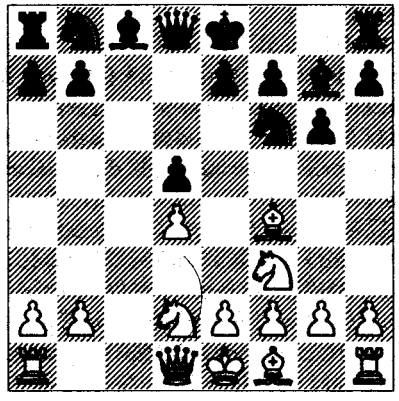
14 ♘c4 ♖b8 15 ♗e3 f5 16 ♗b6

Black has 'played for the loss' from the early opening. He is compelled to give up an exchange without any compensation whatever.

Keres – Fischer
Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade Ct 1959
London System

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 ♗f4 ♗g7 4 ♘bd2 c5 5 c3 cxd4 6 cxd4 d5 *(D)*

W



Black prevents e4 and keeps the symmetry in order to share power in the centre. The decision involves a pawn sacrifice.

7 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕xa7 ♘e4

The first explanation of the sacrificial idea: Black is trying to disrupt his opponent's normal development and create counter-pressure while the queen is grounded at a7 and before the white king escapes by castling.

10 e3 ♘xd2 11 ♘xd2

Taking with the king may occur to us, but we realize instantaneously it's just inviting trouble.

11...e5

This is the idea behind 9...♘e4. By opening the position Black intends to catch the white king in the centre while also shaping the game to suit the bishop-pair.

12 ♘b3

Ragozin considered it stronger to clarify the situation in the centre by 12 ♘f3!?. However, after 12...exd4 13 ♘xd4 0-0 White is still at a loss how to finish his development: 14 ♗e2 would be met by 14...♕c7, while 14 ♕c5 ♖c8 15 ♕xd5 (15 ♕b4 ♖e8 16 ♗e2 transposes to the game) 15...♕e7 (15...♗e6 16 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 is enough for equality) is hardly attractive.

12...0-0 13 ♕c5

On 13 ♗e2 there is 13...♕g5, when 14 0-0 does not work due to 14...♗h3 and 14 ♗f3 is not available because of 14...e4.

The text-move brings the queen back into play, but it does nothing in the way of development.

13...♖c8 14 ♕b4

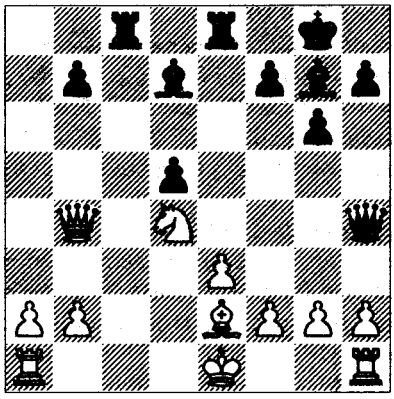
Under the circumstances one does not even consider grabbing another pawn by 14 ♕xd5.

14...♖e8 15 ♗e2 exd4

The tension in the centre still operates in Black's favour. Instead of releasing it, Black could have chosen 15...♕g5!? with the initiative (16 g3 ♖c2 17 ♗d3 ♖xb2), but he remains concentrated on keeping the white king in the centre.

16 ♘xd4 ♕h4 *(D)*

W



Now the desired 17 0-0 obviously does not pass due to 17...♗xd4, but 17 g3 is no better because of 17...♕e4. The apparently stabilizing 17 ♖d1 provokes 17...♖xe3!, when 18 g3 fails to 18...♖xe2+. Keres, therefore, counterattacks.

17 ♕xb7 ♗xd4 18 ♕xd7 ♗xb2 19 ♖d1 ♗c3+ 20 ♔f1 d4

Black has carried out his plan of preventing White from castling at a small price of one pawn, for which he has full compensation. 20...♖cd8 would be met by 21 ♕g4.

21 exd4 ♕e4 22 ♕g4 ♕c2 23 g3

Otherwise 23...♕xd1+ with mate.

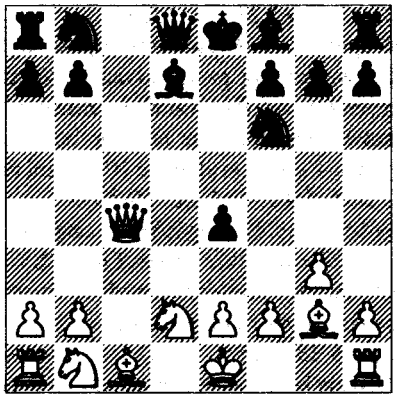
23...♕xa2 24 ♗b5??

Having weathered Black's initiative, 24 ♗f3 was enough to secure the king and draw, but White blunders and loses.

24...♕d5 25 ♗xe8 ♕xh1+ 26 ♔e2 ♖xe8+ 27 ♔d3 ♗e1 0-1

I was demonstrating this game in the playing hall on a large wooden board as we used to do in those days. At the end, when I asked the players to sign the scoresheet, I remember I was taken by surprise to see Fischer very excited, while Keres remained unperturbed, although he lost to his relatively inexperienced opponent, while Tal had tricked Smyslov from a completely lost game into a draw by repetition. That night everybody felt that Tal set sail towards the top.

B



Ed. Lasker – Capablanca
Lake Hopatcong 1926

We are hardly out of the opening, and the e4-pawn is doomed. Could it be that so early in the opening Capablanca has blundered a pawn? The next move is his foreboding reply...

10...e3!

The aims are clear: to damage the white pawn-structure and impede his normal, harmonious development.

11 fxe3

Note that 11 ♗xb7 does not work due to 11...exd2+ followed by 12...♗e6 and 13...♘bd7.

11...♗c6 12 0-0

Capturing on c6 speeds up Black's development, while avoiding the exchange by 12 e4 opens the dark a7-g1 diagonal and 12...♕b6 poses some new problems.

12...♗xg2 13 ♔xg2 ♗e7 14 ♘c3

On 14 ♕b5+, 14...♕d7 gives Black a good game, but one could expect him to sacrifice another pawn, increasing his lead in development by 14...♘bd7 15 ♕xb7 0-0.

14...0-0 15 ♘f3 ♘bd7 16 e4 ♖c8 17 ♕b5

On 17 ♕d3 Black's lead in development comes to the fore after 17...♘c5 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19 e5 ♘fe4.

17...a6

All of a sudden the queen is exposed and must run for cover.

18 ♕f5

Grabbing the pawn is not so profitable; after 18 ♕xb7 ♘c5 Black wins back the pawn.

18...♖c5 19 ♕f4

19 e5 is a good alternative.

19...♖c4 20 ♗e3 ♗c5 21 ♘d2 ♖b4 22 b3 ♕e7 23 a3 ♗xe3 24 ♕xe3 ♖b6

The apparently wayward rook, having provoked a weakening pawn advance, returns to exert pressure on the doubled central pawns. The consequences of the damage done to the white pawn-formation at move 10 are still there.

25 ♖ad1 ♖e6 26 b4 ♖c8 27 ♕d4?

Threatened by 27...♘g4, White ought to have taken a simple measure to avert it: 27 h3.

Now his position, burdened by structural drawbacks, starts to deteriorate.

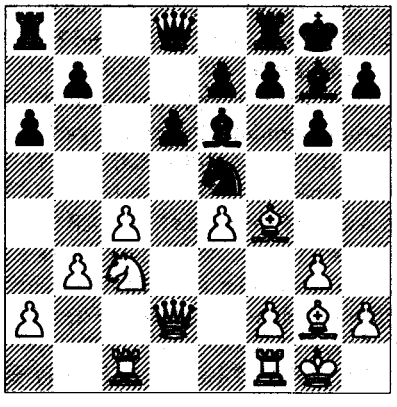
27...♖d6 28 ♘d5?!

Relatively best was to repent and go back, although 28 ♕e3 ♘g4 29 ♕f4 ♖xc3 30 ♕xg4 ♘e5 31 ♕f4 g5 32 ♕f5 ♖c2 is not easy either.

28...♘xd5 29 exd5 ♕xe2+ 30 ♔g1 ♘f6 31 ♘b3 ♖xd5 32 ♕f2 ♕xd1 33 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 34 ♔g2 ♘g4 35 ♕b6 h5 36 ♘c5 ♖e8 0-1

The games we have seen so far have been characterized by early pawn sacrifices: pawns were offered in the opening phase. However, in majority of cases a pawn sacrifice for the initiative happens at the transition into the middlegame.

B



Spassky – Kasparov
Belfort 1988

Our first impression is of a powerful Maroczy Bind in the centre, which affords White a spatial advantage and which usually means long suffering for the inferior side. However, Kasparov's rejoinder destabilizes the peaceful scene.

15...b5! 16 cxb5 axb5 17 ♘xb5 ♕a5!

The point of the pawn sacrifice: Black offers to simplify into an endgame in which his active pieces will regain the material with advantage; for instance, 18 ♕xa5 ♖xa5 19 ♘d4 (or: 19 ♘c3 ♘d3 20 ♖c2 ♖c8 21 ♗d2 ♖ac5; 19 ♘c7 ♘d3 20 ♖c2 ♖c8) 19...♗g4, when 20 f3 fails to 20...♘d3, while 20 ♘c6 ♘xc6 21 ♖xc6 ♖xa2 is pleasant for Black.

18 ♘c3 ♖fc8 19 ♘a4

19 ♘d5 simplifies via numerous exchanges to a pleasant endgame for Black: 19...♕xd2 20 ♖xc8+ (or 20 ♗xd2 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♖xa2) 20...♖xc8 21 ♗xd2 ♗xd5 22 exd5 ♖c2. With the text-move White is trying to protect the a2-pawn.

19...♕xd2 20 ♗xd2 ♘d3

The energy produced by the pawn offer has taken a new form in dominance on the c-file. Winning the open file is a secure source of counterplay.

21 ♖cd1

Interpolating the exchange of a rook-pair by 21 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 22 ♖d1 would be met again by 22...♗g4, when 23 f3 fails to 23...♗d4+ 24 ♔f1 ♗d7, with play similar to that in the game.

21...♗g4

Ignoring the threat of 22 ♘b6, Black attacks first and wins an exchange.

22 ♗g5!

White reacts correctly. 22 ♘b6 ♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 (23 ♘xc8 ♗e2) would fail to 23...♘xf2. On 22 f3 there is the cold-blooded 22...♗d7 (this time on 22...♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 ♗d7 there is 24 ♗e3) 23 ♗e3 ♗xa4 24 bxa4 ♘b2 with fine play.

22...♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♘b2 24 ♘xb2 ♗xb2 25 ♗xe7 ♖xa2 26 ♗xd6 ♖a1

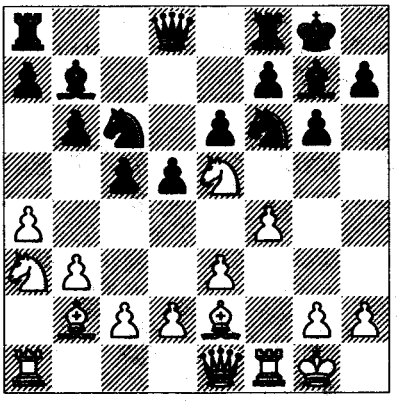
In exchanging a pair of rooks, Black intends to target the f2-pawn, but we shall see that White can protect the weak point by a timely reaction. Instead, the pin by 26...♖d8, threatening 27...♗e5 and recommended by annotators, seems to cause more difficulties. It threatens to

reach a simpler but advantageous endgame. For example, 27 ♖d5 ♗a3 28 e5 (or 28 ♗xa3 ♖xd5 29 exd5 ♖xa3) 28...♗xd6 29 exd6 ♖a6 winning one of the passed pawns. However, better is 27 ♗f3! ♗a3 28 ♗xa3 (if 28 e5, then 28...♗xd6 29 exd6 ♖a6 30 d7 ♔f8 31 b4 ♖b6) 28...♖xd1+ 29 ♗xd1 ♖xa3 30 ♔f1.

27 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 28 ♗f1 ♖c2 29 g4 ♗d4 30 ♗g3

and White was safe.

B



Ljubojević – Smyslov
Skopje OL 1972

Smyslov now embarked on an ambitious plan, seeking the initiative:

11...d4!? 12 ♗f3 ♘d5 13 exd4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 cxd4 15 ♕e4

The exchanges have endangered the survival of the d4-pawn, but before it is lost, Black relies on his bishops to generate strong counterplay.

15...♗a6 16 ♖fe1 ♕c7 17 ♕xd4 ♖ad8 18 g3 ♖fe8!

Without this move, the pawn sacrifice would have no justification. By exchanging off his dark-squared bishop, White has weakened his dark squares and Black's threats are announced in the form of 19...♗f8. The question is how to meet it. 19 ♕f2? provokes 19...♗f8, when either 20 d4 or 20 ♘ac4 ♗c5 21 d4 ♗b4 emphasizes the weakness of the dark squares; for example, 22 ♖ed1 f6 23 ♘g4 ♔g7. The prophylactic retreat by 19 ♕b2 is possible, given that 19...♘xf4 20 gxf4 ♕c5+ 21 ♖e3 is by no means clear (not 21 ♔h1? ♖xd2 22 ♖g1 ♕e3). 19 ♔h1 is another option: it refuses to weaken the pawn-formation and it blunts the edge of the coming menace.

19 ♖ad1? ♗f8

What did White miss when playing his 19th move: that the prosaic 20 ♕b2 ♕c5+ costs him a piece or that 20 ♔g2 ♗xa3 21 ♘g4 is refuted by the simple 21...♗f8? Whatever it was, the text-move loses material and Black's gambit pays off beautifully.

20 b4 ♗xb4 21 ♕a1 ♕c5+ 22 d4 ♕c3 23 ♕xc3 ♗xc3

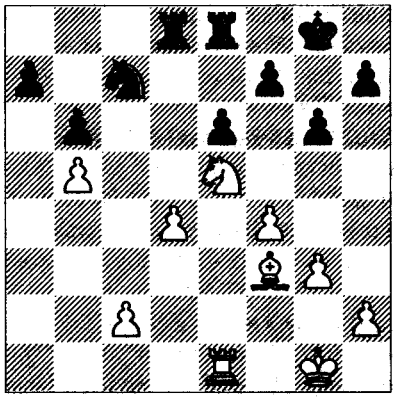
This seemed the end of it, but caught in a grave predicament, Ljubojević did not lose spirit.

24 ♘b5! ♗xe1 25 ♖xe1 ♗xb5

After 25...f6 26 ♘c6 ♗xb5 27 axb5 (not 27 ♘xd8 ♗xa4 28 ♘xe6 ♘c7) 27...♖d7, 28 ♖a1 ♖c8 forces White into an unfavourable move-order, but he can also try 28 c4.

26 axb5 ♘c7 *(D)*

W



27 ♗c6

27 ♘c6 would be met by 27...♘xb5 28 ♘xd8 ♖xd8. More complex is 27 ♖a1, when 27...♘xb5 28 ♗c6 ♘xd4 29 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 30 ♖xa7 as well as 27...♖xd4 28 ♖xa7 ♘xb5 29 ♖xf7 helps White to salvation. To keep his chances Black would have to resort to 27...f6 28 ♘g4 (if 28 ♘c6 then 28...♘xb5 29 ♘xd8 ♖xd8) 28...♔f7 29 ♖xa7 ♖e7.

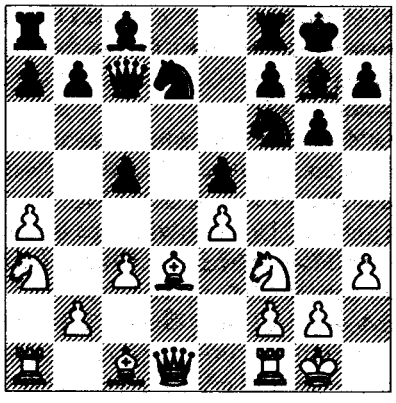
27...♖e7 28 c3 a6 29 ♗b7

Better, but still insufficient, is 29 bxa6 ♘xa6 30 ♖b1 f6 31 ♘g4 ♔f7 32 ♖xb6 ♖a7 (Smyslov).

29...♘xb5 30 ♗xa6 ♘a7 31 ♖b1 b5

and White was lost.

B



Duz-Khotimirsky – Capablanca
Moscow 1925

White's position looks very stable and easy to play, with a clear plan ahead. However, Black has a surprising pawn sacrifice:

11...c4! 12 ♘xc4 ♘c5

As if by magic, a position that only seemed to promise routine pushing of pieces has become exciting. Note that for the moment there is no time for 13 ♘cxe5 because of the nasty pin by 13...♖d8.

13 ♕e2 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♖d8 15 ♕e2 ♗e6!

The point of the sacrifice.

16 ♘a3

White is forced into a passive retreat since 16 ♘cxe5 (or 16 ♘fxe5 ♘h5) does not work due to 16...♘d7 17 ♘xd7 ♗c4.

16...h6 17 ♖e1 a6 18 ♕c2 ♗d7

Two functions are given to the queen's bishop, which is bound for c6: it will increase the pressure on the e4-pawn and prepare ...b5.

19 ♗e3 ♗c6 20 ♘d2 b5

Black bases his counterplay on the minority attack.

21 axb5

Bogoljubow thought 21 a5 was a better option for White, based on 21...♘d7 22 b4. However, it can be met by 21...♕xa5 22 ♘ac4 ♕c7 when the intended 23 ♗b6 fails to 23...♖xd2 24 ♕xd2 ♕b7, but 23 ♘b6 comes into consideration.

21...axb5 22 f3 ♘h5 23 ♖ad1

In order to oppose Black's counterplay on the queenside, 23 b4 and 23 ♕b3 were proposed, but they do not look convincing because of 23...♘f4.

23...♗f8 24 ♘ab1 ♗d7

Aware that playing c4 would free White from passive defence, Black arranges his pieces to meet it. Simultaneously, he prepares to increase his own pressure on the b- and c-files.

25 ♘f1 ♘f4 26 ♘g3?!

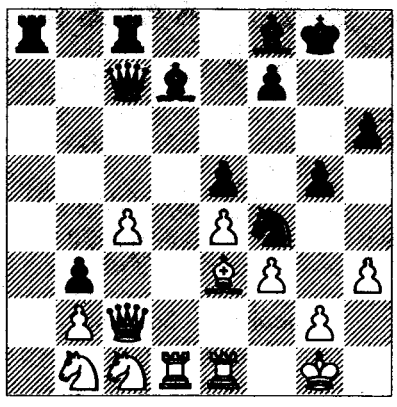
Slow defensive manoeuvring leads to a gradual deterioration of the position. 26 b3 is better.

26...b4 27 ♘e2 g5 28 ♘c1?!

White is getting more and more entangled in the narrow space of his back ranks. He needs more air. 28 ♘xf4 gxf4 29 ♗f2 is better, although 29...♖a2 continues to harass him.

28...♖dc8 29 c4 b3! *(D)*

W



If White hoped to consolidate his queenside position by 30 b3, he was beaten to it. The second pawn sacrifice catches the queen in a tight place, because 30 ♕f2 does not work due to 30...♗xh3, while on 30 ♕c3 the threat is renewed by 30...♖ab8.

30 ♘xb3 ♗a4 31 ♘1d2

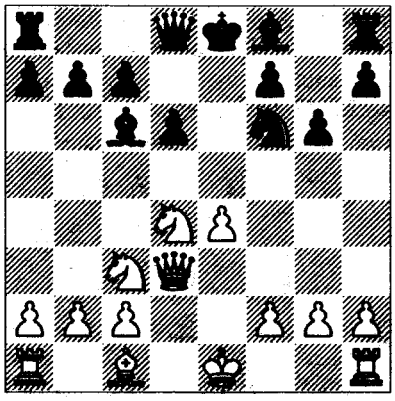
As usually happens, the long passive defence breaks down suddenly. Annotators proposed as better 31 ♗xf4 gxf4 32 ♖d3, but 32...♖cb8 keeps the pressure and threats continue; for instance, 33 ♘1d2 ♗b4 34 ♖a1 and now 34...♗xb3 35 ♘xb3 ♖xa1+ 36 ♘xa1 ♕a7+ wins a piece.

31...♗b4

Now the pins paralyse White and he cannot extricate himself without loss of material.

32 g3 ♘e6 33 ♕d3 ♖d8 34 ♕e2 ♖ab8 35 ♖f1 ♗xd2 36 ♘xd2 ♗xd1 37 ♕xd1 ♖xb2 38 ♕c1 ♖a2 39 ♖f2 ♖d3 40 ♘f1 ♖aa3

The defence is running out of steam.



Nimzowitsch – Capablanca
St Petersburg 1914

When Black made the risky decision to fianchetto his king's bishop, White, instead of increasing the pressure by 9 ♗g5 followed by 0-0-0, responded with a somewhat dubious decision to win a pawn:

9 ♘xc6?! bxc6 10 ♕a6 ♕d7

Saving material by 10...c5 11 ♕c6+ ♘d7 obviously fails to 12 ♗g5.

11 ♕b7 ♖c8 12 ♕xa7 ♗g7 13 0-0 0-0

White has won a pawn, but not for free. He is behind in development, and his queen is astray. Besides, Black's minor pieces are better placed for the coming middlegame struggle: the fianchettoed bishop is superior to the c1-bishop, while the knight, which temporarily exerts pressure on the e4-pawn and potentially supports ...d5, can be centralized via d7 or g4.

14 ♕a6

Three problems are on White's mind: how to activate the queen, how to activate the bishop and in which order to do it. e3 is not a very appealing post for the queen, because it is exposed to either ...♖e8 or to ...♘g4. The retreat to a4 is somewhat better, but it is exposed to ...♖a8 and the manoeuvre ...♘g4-e5. As far as the bishop goes, 14 ♗g5 is a blank shot met by 14...♘g4, while on 14 ♗f4 there is 14...♖b8 15 ♖ab1 ♖b4 with strong pressure on the rank. The priority should be given to the bishop. Therefore, 14 ♗d2.

14...♖fe8 15 ♕d3?!

This voluntary retreat frees Black's hands. 15 f3 would delay Black's energetic manoeuvre which follows.

15...♕e6! 16 f3 ♘d7

The g4-square has been denied to the f6-knight, but now d7 is available. By moving the knight to a more active place, the pressure of the fianchettoed bishop is strengthened.

17 ♗d2

Panov suggests 17 ♗f4 as better, but after 17...♘c5 (avoiding the exchange at e5) Black's initiative grows: 18 ♕d2 ♕c4 or 18 ♕e2 f5.

17...♘e5 18 ♕e2 ♘c4 19 ♖ab1

19 b3, unfortunately, is not available because of 19...♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♕f6.

19...♖a8 20 a4?

On the natural 20 b3 Capablanca demonstrated 20...♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♖a3!, recapturing the a2-pawn in due course. However, the optimistic text-move loosens the whole queenside structure and leads to serious difficulties.

20...♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♕c4

Obvious, but powerful.

22 ♖fd1 ♖eb8!

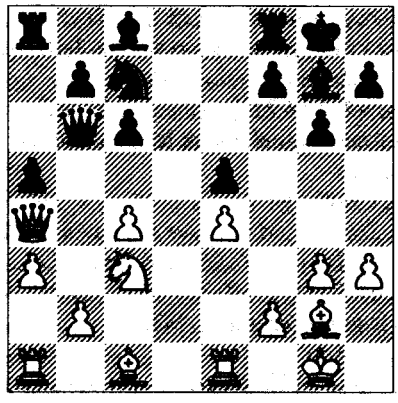
Black is not satisfied with a draw. He threatens 23...♖xb2, and increases the pressure on the weakened formation.

23 ♕e3?

White resists poorly in an already critical position. 23 ♕d3 was indispensable. Now the pressure on the b-file quickly decides.

23...♖b4 24 ♕g5 ♗d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♖ab8

The white structure starts to fall apart.



Karpov – Lautier
Biel 1990

This position arose from a somewhat rare variation of the King's Indian Defence, which

Smyslov used from time to time. Black is planing the natural 16...♘e6, forcing White to take energetic steps if he hopes to keep his initial advantage. Karpov was up to the task.

16 ♗e3!

At first the offer of the b2-pawn looks like it entices the black queen into a minefield where it must perish, but then it becomes less clear how to trap it. However, we shall see that the point of the sacrifice is deeper than that.

16...♕xb2

Black's decision was not so difficult, given that 16...♕a6 17 ♗f1 ♘e6 is answered by 18 ♘d5.

17 ♖ec1 b5 18 ♕d1

On 18 cxb5 Black responds 18...♘xb5 19 ♘d1 ♕e2 and the queen slips out.

The text-move poses greater difficulties because natural moves like 18...♗e6 and 18...b4 both fail, the former to 19 ♖a2, and the latter to 19 ♘a4. Black is limited to 'only' moves.

18...bxc4 19 ♗c5

By threatening to trap the queen, White wins an exchange. What's more, if Black tries to save the queen by running away, then 19...♕b8 20 ♖cb1 ♗b7 21 ♖b2 leads to rueful consequences. Pressed by hard facts, Black resorts to tactical solutions.

19...♘e6!

This involves a queen sacrifice, but for good compensation after 20 ♖ab1 ♕xc1 21 ♕xc1 (or 21 ♖xc1 ♘xc5 22 ♘a4 ♘b3) 21...♘xc5 22 ♘a4 ♘xa4 23 ♕xc4 ♗e6 24 ♕xc6 ♘c3 25 ♕xc3 a4, fixing the a3-pawn on a dark square, and thus leaving it vulnerable.

20 ♘a4 ♕b3 21 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 22 ♗f1

It's time to eliminate at least one of the doubled pawns.

22...♘d4

22...♗a6 would not save the pawn: 23 ♖ab1 ♕xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♗xa3 25 ♘b6 ♖e8 (or 25...♖b8 26 ♘xc4 ♖xb1 27 ♖xb1) 26 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 27 ♘xc4 is advantageous to White.

23 ♖xc4

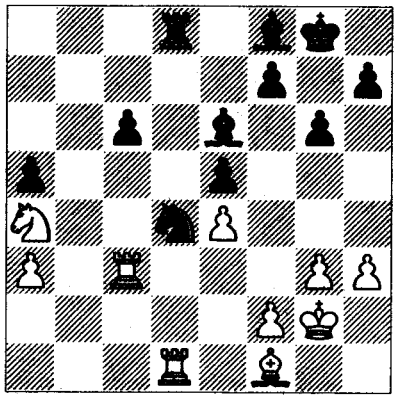
This time 23 ♖ab1 is not convincing because of 23...♕xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 c3, diverting the knight from b6. 23 ♗xc4 would be met by 23...♕xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♘c2 followed by 25...♘xa3.

23...♕xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♗e6

Correct judgement. Some annotators, among them Karpov himself, believe that 24...♗xa3 is more promising, but I disagree since 25 ♘b6 ♖b8 26 ♖a4! ♗b4 27 ♘c4 wins back one of the pawns advantageously.

25 ♖c3 ♖d8 26 ♔g2 *(D)*

B



26...♖b8

With the king enticed to g2, the planned penetration to the second rank will be more effective.

27 ♘c5 ♖b2 28 ♗d3

28 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 29 ♖xc6 would not pay off due to 29...♗c5, but the text-move makes it possible.

28...♗a2 29 ♘a4 ♖b3 30 ♖a1

Somewhat better is 30 ♖dc1!? ♗xa3 31 ♖a1 ♖xc3 32 ♘xc3 ♗b2 33 ♖xa2 ♗xc3 34 f4 (Karpov). On c4, his bishop would take care of both black passed pawns, freeing the rook.

30...♖xc3 31 ♘xc3 ♗b3 32 ♘e2

On 32 ♘b1 Karpov gives 32...♗h6!; he also examines 32 a4?! ♗b4 33 ♘e2 c5.

32...a4

Fixing the a3-pawn on the dark square is an important detail.

33 f4 ♘b5?

Karpov passes over this move without comment, but this is the moment when Black stumbles after a long and excellent defence. After 33...♘xe2 34 ♗xe2 exf4 35 gxf4 c5 36 ♖c1 c4 37 ♗xc4 ♗xa3 the endgame is drawn, while 33...c5 is another good option for Black.

34 fxe5!

An unexpected but strong move. While Black occupies himself by capturing the e5-pawn, the pressure on the a3-pawn will lessen and the rook will be freed.

34...♗g7

Unfortunately, 34...♘xa3 35 ♘d4 c5 does not work due to 36 ♘xb3 axb3 37 ♖xa3 c4 38 ♖a8 cxd3 39 ♔f3.

35 ♖c1 ♗xe5 36 ♖xc6 ♘xa3 37 ♘g1!

Excellent! Having excluded the a3-knight from play, the white knight is manoeuvred to d2.

37...♔f8

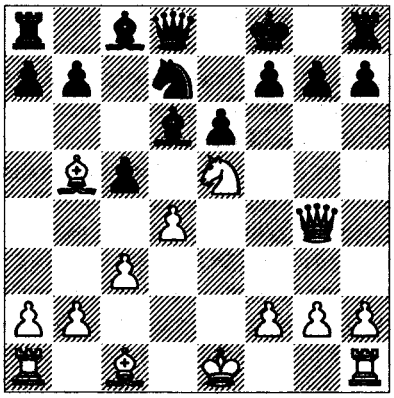
37...♗b2 is insufficient: 38 ♘f3 ♘b5 39 ♗xb5 a3 40 ♘d2 ♗e6 41 ♖xe6.

38 ♘f3 ♗b2 39 ♘d2 ♗d1 40 ♖c7 ♗e5 41 ♖c5 ♗d4 42 ♖c8+ ♔e7 43 ♖c7+ ♔e6 44 ♘f3 ♗b2 45 ♖b7 ♗c1 46 ♔f2 h5 47 ♗e2 ♗b3

After 47...♗xe2 48 ♔xe2 the knight is still trapped on a3.

48 ♘d4+ ♔e5 49 ♘xb3 axb3 50 ♖xb3 ♔xe4 51 ♗d3+ 1-0

51...♔d4 52 ♔e2 followed by 53 ♔d1 is decisive.



W

Kasparov – Ponomariov
Linares 2002

11 0-0

This move involves a pawn sacrifice. At that moment two things were certain: that the offer cannot be refused and that White would have compensation in the form of better development. What he would be able to make out of it was another question.

11...♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗g5

There are no weak points in Black's defensive formation, but here, at his first major decision-point, we get a better insight in Black's difficulties.

13...♗f6

Catching breath by 13...f6 actually does not win time, but further opens the position, and difficulties start to pile up. After 14 ♖ad1, 14...♕e7 (14...♕b6 threatens nothing) 15 ♗e3 b6 (otherwise 16 ♗xc5) 16 f4 ♗c7 17 ♖d2 leaves Black impotent against White's plan of doubling rooks on the open file. On 14...♕c7, 15 ♕h5 will pry the door more open, when 15...g6 16 ♕h6+ ♔f7 17 f4 starts a vicious attack of active superior forces against uncoordinated defence. Kasparov had in mind 17...♗d6 18 f5! exf5 19 ♗c4+ ♗e6 20 ♖xf5! ♗xh2+ 21 ♔h1 ♗e5 22 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗xe6+ ♔xe6 24 ♕h3+.

14 ♖ad1 ♕c7

The e7-square must remain at the king's disposal. After 14...♕e7 15 ♗xf6, 15...gxf6 weakens the king critically (16 ♕h4 h5 17 ♖d2 a6 18 ♖fd1), while after 15...♕xf6 16 ♕g3 g6 17 ♕d6+ ♔g7 18 ♕xc5 the king manages to castle 'by hand', but Black still faces insurmountable development problems.

15 ♕h4

There is a Croatian saying for somebody who expects more than necessary: "He asks for cakes in place of bread". In our position 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♖d2 followed by 17 ♖fd1 keeps a clear advantage. However, why not take more if the position offers it?

15...♗xg5

Black enters a similar position to one we analysed above after 13...f6, but in a somewhat better version. 15...♔e7 would be challenged at once by 16 f4 a6 17 f5, which forces 17...e5 and creates weaknesses on the light squares: 18 ♗c4 b5 19 ♗d5 is difficult to meet, given that 19...♗b7 fails to 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 21 ♖fe1 ♕c7 22 ♖d5.

16 ♕xg5 f6 17 ♕h5 g6 18 ♕h6+ ♔f7 19 ♖d3?!

In comparison with the note to Black's 13th move White is a step slower and f4 cannot have such a devastating effect. 19 ♖d2 would be consistent with the sacrificial idea, doubling rooks and keeping the f1-a6 diagonal free for the bishop's retreat. Then 19...a6 20 ♗d3 still keeps the lid on Black's development; 20...♗d7 does not work due to 21 ♖fd1 ♗c6 (not 21...♖ad8 22 ♗xg6+) 22 ♗e4. In case of 20...f5 21 ♖fd1 b5 22 ♗e2 the initial development difficulties continue to harass Black (White threatens 23 ♖d8).

The text-move transfers the attack to the king-side, but gives Black a chance to finish his development painlessly.

19...a6 20 ♖h3 ♕e7?!

Scared of 21 ♕xh7+, Black misses the moment he has been awaiting so long. 20...♗d7! finally works and 21 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 22 ♕xh7+ would lead to a drawn rook endgame. After the text-move the battle flares up again.

21 ♗d3 f5 22 g4!

If White is not ready to take a draw by 22 ♕xh7+, then this is certainly most difficult to meet; gxf5 will be at hand, but g5 can also come into consideration.

22...♕f6 23 ♖d1!

The right place for the rook. Doubling rooks on the open file still remains on the cards.

23...b5 24 ♗e2 e5

Opening the position can hurt Black, but waiting is the worst policy. Although it looks suspect, 24...g5 is a sound try. 25 ♕h5+ ♕g6 26 gxf5 exf5 and now:

a) 27 ♖e3 obliges Black to be cautious. 27...f4? loses to 28 ♖d6. On 27...g4 White can avoid the exchange of queens by 28 ♗xg4; if 28...♖g8 then 29 ♔f1 fxg4 30 ♕d5+ ♗e6 31 ♕b7+ ♔f6 32 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 33 ♕c6+, when White should win. Therefore, 27...♖a7 is better, when it is not clear how White can squeeze out of the position anything more than adequate compensation for the pawn.

b) 27 ♖d6 ♕xh5 28 ♗xh5+ leads to interesting possibilities, when White has a pleasant endgame in spite of his material disadvantage.

The text-move exposes the king to a more dangerous attack.

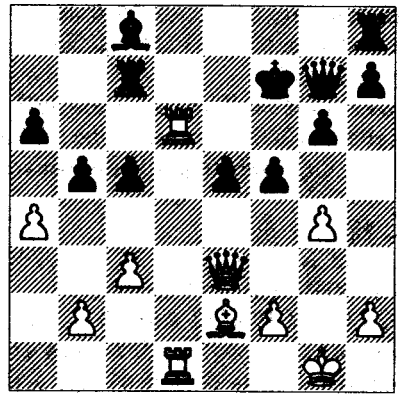
25 ♖hd3 ♖a7?

The decisive moment. This move fulfils the long-waited desire to engage at least one of the rooks in the battle, but as a consequence the black queen's position will deteriorate. Kasparov recommended 25...fxg4 in order to meet 26 ♖d6 by 26...♕f4, when Black forces the exchange of queens after 27 ♕h4 g3!. Instead, 27 ♖xg6 ♕xh6 28 ♖xh6 ♔g7 29 ♖c6 gives White just a small advantage.

26 ♖d6 ♕g7 27 ♕e3 ♖c7 28 a4! *(D)*

Most unpleasant. At the moment when Black seems to have parried the threats and his position has improved substantially, White targets another vulnerable point.

B



28...e4

28...c4 does not work due to 29 axb5 axb5 30 ♕b6 ♖b7 31 ♕xb7+, etc., which means that White will get what he wants – the c4-square for the bishop. It also means that the black king's situation has deteriorated dangerously.

29 axb5 axb5 30 ♗xb5 ♕e5 31 ♕g5

31 ♖1d5 is quite enough.

31...♕e7

31...♗e6 is insufficient due to 32 ♗c4! ♖e8 33 ♖1d5! ♕f6 34 ♕f4 (Kasparov).

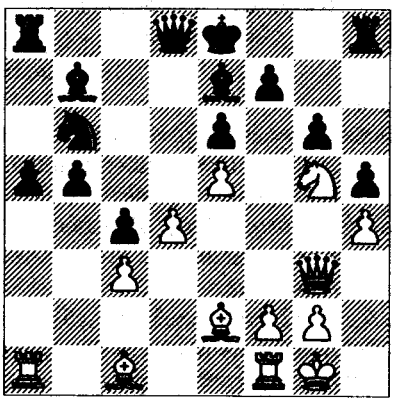
32 ♕h6 ♗e6 33 ♕f4

Good, but 33 gxf5, to which White turns in two moves, was the short-cut.

33...♗c8 34 ♕h6 ♗e6 35 gxf5 gxf5 36 ♗e2 ♕f6 37 ♗h5+ ♔e7 38 ♖xe6+ 1-0

Outwitting the opponent is not an easy job. A correct material sacrifice is often the starting point of a long painstaking process.

W



Petrosian – Smyslov
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951

White has emerged from the opening with a doubtful position: a pawn down, facing Black's queenside pawn-majority, and with no signs of real compensation.

But he had a sober head and a few ideas...

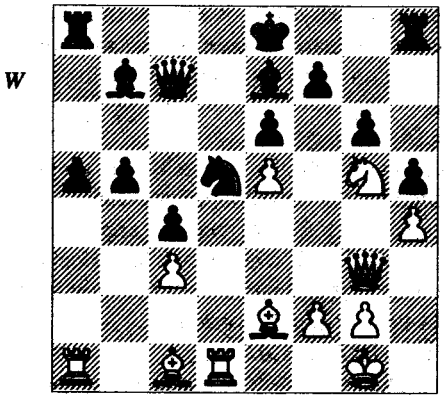
17 d5!

What does White give up this pawn for? At first it seems one of those blank shots to which we tend to resort in order to confuse the opponent. However, when you study the position and White's chances, you realize that the sacrifice represents the only active plan which stands a chance. White understood perfectly that he could not wait.

17...♘xd5?!

During the game this must have looked a perfectly sound reply, even to such a colossus as Vasily Smyslov. Only the course of the game and the patient analysis, going backwards and searching for errors, pinpointed this move as inferior to 17...♗xd5, which keeps the e4-square under surveillance. Simultaneously Black's c4-pawn is protected and the mass of pawns ready to advance, while 18 ♕f4 ♗xg5 strengthens Black's position into an impenetrable fortress. Of course, taking with the bishop does not settle the issue. 18 ♖d1 ♕c7 19 ♗f3 continues to pose difficult questions despite White's two-pawn deficit.

18 ♖d1 ♕c7 *(D)*



19 ♘e4!

The consequence: the knight lands on a beautiful central square and all at once we feel that Black's king is not secure any more. It cannot castle kingside, except by hand (19...♔f8 and 20...♔g7), which some annotators proposed. As for castling queenside, we shall get some answers in the game.

19...0-0-0 20 ♗g5!

The essential point of White's 19th move: exchanging the dark-squared bishops weakens the complex of the dark squares in Black's camp, notably the d6-square.

20...♗xg5 21 ♕xg5 a4

Not an appealing move, but Black is getting ready against ♘d6+; it is clear that his intention is to solve the problem by an exchange sacrifice.

22 ♕g3 f5

Although alternatives are not very impressive, one does not like this weakening move.

23 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 24 exd6 f4?

Black gets enough material for the sacrificed exchange, but from now on he must live with a loose pawn-structure. 24...♕g7 is indispensable, although after 25 ♗f3 White continues to exert pressure which is very likely enough to keep the balance, but not more than that.

25 ♕xg6 ♕xd6 26 ♗f3 ♗c6 27 ♖e1 ♖e8 28 ♗xd5!

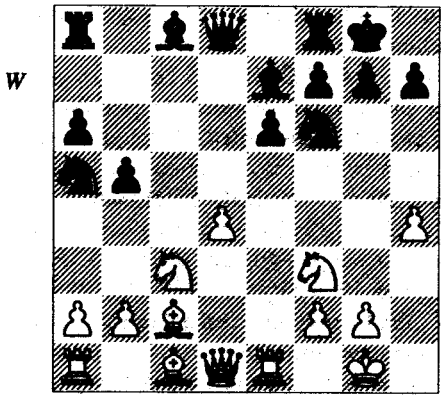
The winning move!

28...♕xd5 29 ♖ad1 ♕f5

If 29...♕c5, then 30 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 31 ♕xe6+ ♔c7 32 ♕f7+ ♔b6 33 ♕xf4, etc.

30 ♕xf5 exf5 31 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 32 f3

The white king hurries to the queenside to prevent any counterplay, with a simple win.



Kramnik – Hübner
Dortmund 2000

We see the essentials at a glance. White will exert pressure on the black king's position via

the b1-h7 diagonal. On the other hand, Black is ready to establish lasting control of the d5-square by fianchettoing his queen's bishop. What confuses us at the moment is the somewhat unusual position of the h-pawn, but we shall understand its function soon.

13 ♕d3 ♗b7 14 h5!?

The immediate 14 ♗g5 would be met by the solid 14...g6. The text-move, therefore, prepares 15 ♗g5 g6 16 hxg6 hxg6, when the defence would be softened and White's attacking chances increased; note that ♖xe6 hangs over Black, while the quiet ♘e5 will not be pleasant either. There is just one little problem with it: the idea involves a pawn sacrifice...

14...♗xf3 15 ♕xf3 ♕xd4 16 ♗f4

This natural developing move, which in passing blocks the fourth rank and prevents the freeing 16...♕g4, places the important central e5-square under surveillance and vacates the first rank for the queen's rook, accentuating the uncomfortable situation of the black queen in the middle of the board. We feel at once that the compensation for the sacrificed pawn will be sought at the queen's cost, but simultaneously h6 and kingside threats will constantly complicate Black's life.

16...b4?!

Judging from the course of the game this is not the moment for pretentious moves of this kind. While all White's forces are ready to attack, Black spends a tempo which could be better used, although other options involve other difficulties. Thus:

a) 16...♘c4 17 ♖ad1 ♕c5 18 b3 (18 g4 enhances the volume of intricate possibilities, which cannot be discarded, although the first impression is of over-optimism) 18...♘a3 19 ♖e5 ♕a7 20 ♗d3 leaves the knight out of play.

b) 16...♖ac8 17 ♖ad1 ♕a7 (if 17...♕c5, then 18 h6 is most unpleasant due to 18...g6 19 ♗d6 or 18...♕h5 19 ♕g3 g6 20 ♖e5 ♕g4 21 ♕h2, but 17...♕b4 comes into consideration) 18 ♗e5 is advantageous for White.

c) Given that the move h6 constantly hangs over Black, Rublevsky recommended 16...h6 17 ♖ad1 ♕c5, continuing 18 ♗e5 ♖ad8 19 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20 ♕e4 ♕f5. However, 18 ♖e5 ♕c6 19 ♕g3 keeps the pressure.

The play is branching widely, demanding sharp intuition and clear judgement.

17 ♖ad1 ♕c4

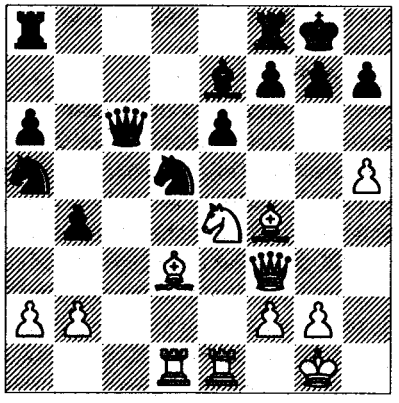
On 17...♕b6, 18 ♘e4 keeps the pressure and the initiative. On 17...♕c5, 18 ♖e5 ♕b6 19 ♕g3 also looks suspect for Black.

18 ♗d3 ♕c6 19 ♘e4

There is no rest for the black queen – it's again in the wrong place. Moreover, 19...♖ad8, which would eliminate the menace on the b1-h7 diagonal, does not avoid the unpleasant 20 h6.

19...♘d5 *(D)*

W



20 ♗e5!

20 h6 weakens the f6-square, attracting us with various tactical options (21 ♗d6). However, as all great players, Kramnik possesses that extraordinary sense which finds the simplest path in a labyrinth. We notice that the by-product of the material sacrifice is some sort of compensation in all the branches we have discussed.

20...f5

This finally blocks the irritating pressure generated by the d3-bishop, but creates a hole on e5. 20...f6 21 ♗d4 e5 was not appealing either due to 22 ♘g3, when Black has taken care of the dark a1-h8 diagonal, but the light b1-h7 one has been critically weakened.

21 ♕g3 ♖f7 22 ♘d2

22 ♘g5 ♗xg5 23 ♕xg5 is advantageous to White as well. We feel that the pawn has not been sacrificed in vain. The black pawn-structure is permanently weakened.

22...♘b7?!

Although on the edge of the board, the knight does its duty controlling the c4-square. Its transfer to c5 costs time, to the serious detriment of

the position. We shall soon see why. 22...♖d8 is better.

23 ♘f3 ♘c5 24 ♘d4 ♕b6

After 24...♕b7 25 ♗c4 ♖d8 26 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 27 ♕f3 ♘g5 28 ♕b3 or 24...♕d7 25 ♘xf5 exf5 26 ♗c4 the defence falls apart. By playing ...f5, Black healed one light diagonal, but weakened another – the a2-g8 diagonal, which fell prey to the mighty light-squared bishop as soon as it had the c4-square at its disposal.

25 ♘xf5 exf5?

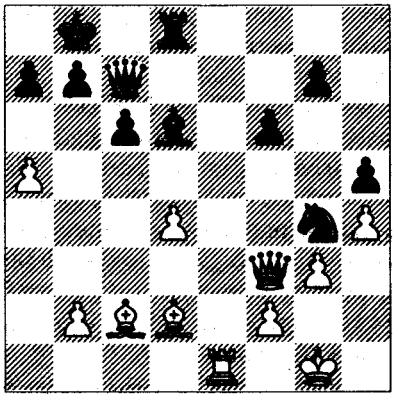
25...♘xd3 is indispensable: 26 ♘h6+ ♔f8 27 ♘xf7 ♕xf2+ 28 ♕xf2 ♘xf2 29 ♔xf2 ♔xf7 and the fight continues.

26 ♗c4 ♘f6 27 ♗c7 1-0

Looking back we find that between moves 15 and 24 the black queen moved no fewer than four times and never found peace. White capitalized skilfully on its early exposure. The initiative generated by the pawn sacrifice first carved the static weakness e5 in Black's pawn-formation and after the erroneous manoeuvre ...♘b7-c5 it became stronger and was transformed into a material advantage. Truly a real sacrifice!

Going deeper into the middlegame we come across pawn sacrifices somewhat more rarely. They are mostly material sacrifices for attacking purposes or to simplify towards the endgame.

B



Simagin – Petrosian
Moscow Ch (6) 1956

Facing the threat of ♗g6, Black decided his chances lay in active counterplay:

26...c5

In reply White surprisingly left the d4-pawn *en prise* and threw himself into the attack:

27 a6! cxd4 28 ♗a5

Annotators noted that 28 ♗e4! bxa6 29 ♕d3, preparing 30 ♗g2 and lining up the queen and bishop on the long diagonal, was more difficult to parry. Had Black captured the a6-pawn, White would have certainly reverted to this idea.

28...b6 29 ♗d2

The fruit of the sacrifice is obviously in the perilous position of the black king and the weak light squares.

29...♘e5 30 ♕g2 d3 31 ♗a4 ♗c5?

With the a6-pawn as a bone deep in his throat, any passive defence is likely to finish badly. It was Petrosian who, harassed by his defeat, later found a striking tactical solution in 31...b5!! 32 ♗a5 ♕c6 33 ♗xd8 (or 33 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 34 ♗xd8 bxa4) 33...♘f3+ 34 ♔h1 bxa4.

32 ♖c1 ♕f7 33 b4 ♗d4 34 ♗b3 ♕e7 35 ♗f4

Unfortunately, the pawn on the 6th rank and the centralized pieces do not compensate for the weakness of the long light diagonal, which remains the dominant feature of the position.

35...b5 36 ♕c6 ♕d7 37 ♕e4 ♗b6 38 ♖d1 ♖e8 39 ♖xd3 ♕c8 40 ♗f7 ♖e7 41 ♗xh5

Now it is White who is a pawn up, while the a6-pawn survives.

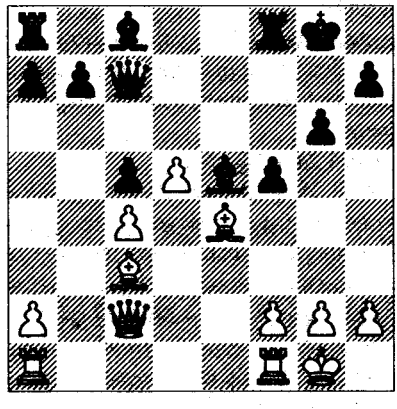
41...♕c4

If 41...♕xa6, then 42 ♗f3 wins.

42 ♕h7

Black's position has become hopeless.

W



Stoček – Ftačnik
Czech League 2000/1

One might expect further exchanges leading to level play, but when starting the skirmish in the centre, White had in mind something else:

19 d6!

This tactical sacrifice announces a most unpleasant time for the exposed black king. Given that 19...♗xh2+ 20 ♔h1 does not solve the problem, the game continued along forcing lines.

19...♕xd6 20 ♗d5+ ♔g7 21 ♖fe1

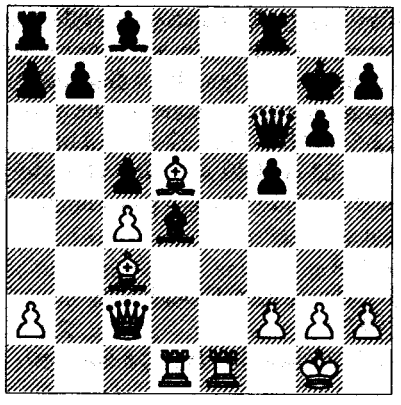
The issue is obviously the long dark diagonal.

21...♗d4

21...♗xc3 22 ♕xc3+ ♕f6 23 ♖e7+ ♔h8 24 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 25 ♖e8+ ♔g7 26 ♖g8+ ♔h6 27 f4 leaves Black in a hopeless situation. After 21...♗f6 22 ♖ad1 ♕b6 Black is vulnerable to ♖e7+, which the quiet 23 ♕c1 would accentuate.

22 ♖ad1 ♕f6 *(D)*

W



23 ♖xd4!

This new material sacrifice follows consistently the idea of the first one – the weakness of the black king combined with his backward development.

23...cxd4 24 ♗b2 g5

24...♗d7 25 ♕d2 ♖ae8 26 ♖c1 f4 27 ♗xd4 ♖e5 comes in time to develop the queenside and close the diagonal, but at the cost of the b7-pawn and an exchange to be taken at will.

25 ♕d2 ♔g6 26 ♗xd4 ♕d8 27 h4

Lining up on the long diagonal by ♗b2 and ♕d4 or ♕e3-e5 would always be met by ...♕f6. Further opening the king's position makes it more vulnerable.

27...a5

The only useful move: the rook finally joins the defence. Unfortunately, it is too late.

Instead, 27...gxh4 28 ♕f4 makes possible 29 ♗e3, while 27...h6 provokes 28 ♕e2, threatening 29 h5+.

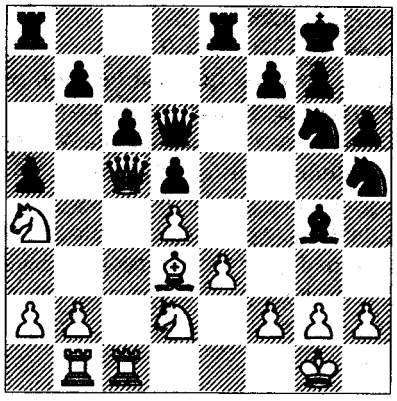
28 hxg5

28 ♗c5!, threatening 29 ♗e7, would have made Black's idea a futile attempt. However, the text-move is good enough too.

28...♕xg5 29 f4 ♕h4 30 ♖e3

White has a decisive plus.

B



Füster – Simagin
Moscow – Budapest 1949

At this point it seems Black is forced to exchange queens, after which his pieces, strewn uselessly on the kingside, would be handicapped in the coming queenless middlegame. However, Simagin had an alternative...

18...♕f6! 19 ♘b6 ♖ad8 20 ♕xa5

Winning a pawn has its price. While White's force is concentrated on the queenside, Black is ready to attack the weakly defended white king. It was time to postpone the capture and consider 20 ♗xg6 ♕xg6 21 ♘f1, although Black's activity remains dangerous; e.g., 21...♗f5 22 ♖a1 ♗e4 23 ♘g3 ♘xg3 24 hxg3 h5 or 21...f5.

20...♘h4 21 ♗f1

Afraid of 21...♘xg2 22 ♔xg2 ♗h3+, White tries to strengthen his king's defence with the piece he has at his disposal.

21...♕g5 22 ♔h1 ♘f6 23 g3

This weakens the light squares, but something had to be done against the threat of 23...♗f5 24 ♖a1 ♘e4.

23...♘f3 24 ♗g2 ♕h5 25 ♘xf3 ♗xf3 26 ♕e1

White has succeeded in reducing the attacker's units and bringing his queen back to defend, but note that Black is still superior on the kingside.

26...♖d6 27 ♔g1

If 27 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 28 ♔g1 then 28...♕h5: 29 ♕f1 ♘e4 or 29 ♕d1 ♘g4.

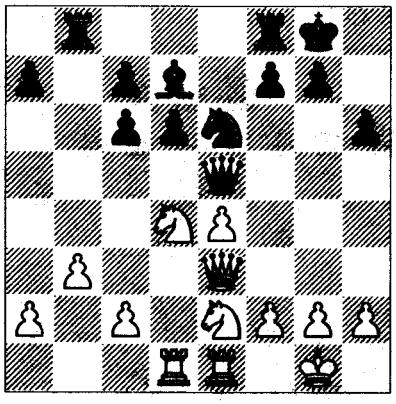
27...♗xg2 28 ♔xg2 ♘g4 29 h3 ♘xf2!

The long initiative reaches its peak. The white queen cannot protect the king against all three of Black's major pieces.

30 ♕xf2 ♖f6 31 ♕g1 ♕e2+ 32 ♔h1 ♖f2 0-1

This game revolved around the question of how to transform the opponent's lost time into an initiative and keep it going. At the end the question was how to transform that initiative into a mating attack by a new material sacrifice.

B



Capablanca – O. Bernstein
San Sebastian 1911

17...♕a5 18 ♘f5 ♘c5

The pawn White offered was a pseudo-sacrifice: 18...♕xa2 would finish badly after 19 ♕c3 ♕a6 20 ♘f4 f6 21 ♕g3 g5 22 ♘g6 ♖f7 23 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 24 ♘xf7 ♔xg6 25 ♘xd6 cxd6 26 ♖xd6 ♖b7 27 e5 (Capablanca). Black must therefore be cautious.

19 ♘ed4 ♔h7

Avoiding 20 ♘xc6.

20 g4 ♖be8 21 f3 ♘e6 22 ♘e2

For the second time in the game White offers a pawn. He is concentrating on his kingside attack and is unconcerned about a pawn on the other side of the board. This time, however, the compensation is not that obvious and the temptation is real.

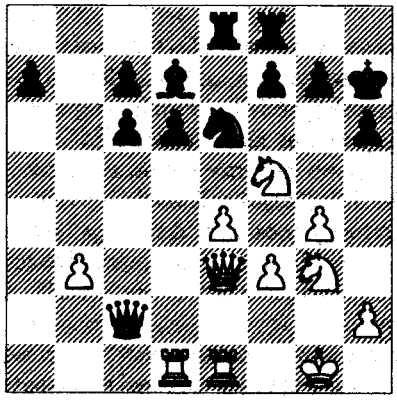
22...♕xa2

Throwing caution to the wind while clouds are gathering over the black king is undoubtedly a risky decision. 22...♕b6 looks more natural.

23 ♘eg3 ♕xc2 *(D)*

Gobbling the second pawn might at first sight look unwise. Considering that White can prevent 24...♕c5 with tempo, this move gives him time to build up his attack. In view of what is coming Lasker thought it was necessary to take preventive measures by 23...f6 24 ♘h5 ♖f7, but as we shall see, this is not the case.

W



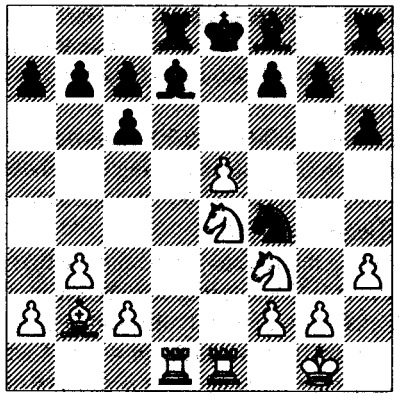
24 ♖c1 ♕b2 25 ♘h5 ♖h8?

One can see from afar that the knight sacrifice on g7 hangs in the air. The text-move parries the threat, but only temporarily. 25...g5 is indispensable, when 26 e5, which Capablanca had in mind, would be met by 26...♘f4; by threatening mate on g2, Black would eliminate the knight-pair (27 ♘xf4 ♗xf5) and the menace is gone. 26 ♖c3 ♘f4 would be no better. Black relies on his queen; erroneously, because in two moves it will be compelled to leave the long diagonal.

26 ♖e2 ♕e5 27 f4 ♕b5 28 ♘fxg7!

Black is now hit from the other side. The point is that after 28...♘xg7 29 ♘f6+ ♔g6 30 ♘xd7 the king is forced out of its hide-out and mate in two is threatened. Then 30...f6 31 e5 opens up the king to a decisive attack.

28...♘c5? 29 ♘xe8 ♗xe8 30 ♕c3 f6 31 ♘xf6+ ♔g6 32 ♘h5 ♖g8 33 f5+ ♔g5 34 ♕e3+ 1-0



Kasparov – Kramnik
Astana 2001

This game was one of a series of battles between these two players in the Berlin Defence. Black must have felt secure having completed the long knight manoeuvre ...♘f5-e7-g6-f4: White's pawn-majority seems well under control, the d5-square is at hand and e6 is available to his minor pieces. How deceptive the game of chess can be! In spite of the impressive surveillance, the e6-square proves sensitive:

16 e6!

A move of tremendous power! The e5-square is vacated and the long diagonal is opened. As a result, the king, which in this variation of the Ruy Lopez bravely stays in the centre, is subjected to lasting pressure.

16...♘xe6

16...♗xe6 17 ♘f6+ ♔e7 18 ♗a3+ demonstrates how precarious the black king's refuge at e8 has become. Somewhat better, but obviously insufficient, is 16...fxe6 17 ♗e5 ♘g6 18 ♗xc7, when White regains the pawn with a spatial advantage.

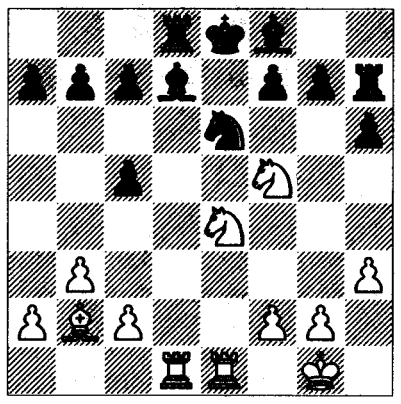
17 ♘d4

This is good, but not as strong as 17 ♗e5! ♖c8 (in case of 17...♗c8 Black is struck again by 18 ♘f6+, when both 18...gxf6 19 ♖xd8+ and 18...♔e7 19 ♘h4 g6 20 ♘d7 finish badly for Black) 18 ♘h4, when White is ready not only for 19 ♘f5, but for 19 f4 too. The text-move makes possible both, but the rook staying at d8 favours the defence.

17...c5

Chasing the knight where it was headed anyway cannot be recommendable in itself, but on the positive side we have to note that on f5 the knight may complicate the impending march of the f-pawn. Thus the preventive 17...♖h7 provokes at once 18 f4, when 18...c5 19 ♘f3 ♗c6 20 ♖b1! ♗xe4 21 ♖xe4 g6 22 g4 (Kasparov) keeps the initiative going with very concrete threats. In this line the h7-rook is placed unfavourably, which prompted Kasparov to recommend 17...♖g8! as an improvement. The difference is clear after 18 f4 c5 19 ♘f3 ♗c6 20 ♖b1 ♗xe4 21 ♖xe4 g6, when 22 g4 loses its point. He therefore intended to continue 18 ♘f5 ♗c8 19 ♘xh6 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖h8 21 ♘f5 f6 with an advantage. Note that 17...♗b4 does not work because of 18 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 19 ♗xg7, while 17...♗c8 offers White a pleasant choice between 18 ♘xe6 ♖xd1 19 ♘xc7+ ♔d7 20 ♖xd1+ ♔xc7 21 ♗e5+ ♔b6 22 ♖d8 with a strong pin and 18 ♘f6+ gxf6 19 ♘xe6 ♖xd1 20 ♘g7+ ♔d7 21 ♖xd1+ ♗d6 22 ♗xf6 h5 23 c4 c5 24 ♖d5 with a material advantage.

18 ♘f5 ♖h7 *(D)*



The g7-pawn must be defended, but it brings the rook into an unfavourable geometrical relation with the king – the result of the hasty 17...c5.

19 ♗f6 ♖c8 20 ♗xg7?!

The energy released by the pawn sacrifice has pushed Black to the edge of the abyss. Instead of this hasty move, Kasparov recommended 20 f4!, when after 20...♗c6 21 ♘fg3 Black faces difficult problems.

20...♗xg7 21 ♘xg7+ ♖xg7 22 ♘f6+ ♔e7 23 ♘xd7 ♖d8 24 ♘e5 ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1

As the result of an inferior solution at move 20, Black has gained some respite thanks to the

simplification. Although practically a pawn down, he has kept the material balance and improved his chances to save what was undoubtedly a dead lost position.

25...♘f4 26 ♔h1!

This quiet, excellent move defends the g2-pawn (26...♖xg2 27 ♘d3) and avoids further simplification after 26 ♘g4 ♘xh3+ 27 gxh3 h5.

26...♖g5 27 ♘g4 ♖d5 28 ♖e1+

Exchanges would win the h6-pawn, but lose a pawn on the queenside, which would facilitate the creation of a black passed pawn – an outcome White rightly refuses to accept. Instead White activates the rook and seizes the initiative again.

28...♔f8 29 ♘xh6 ♖d2 30 ♖e5! ♖xf2

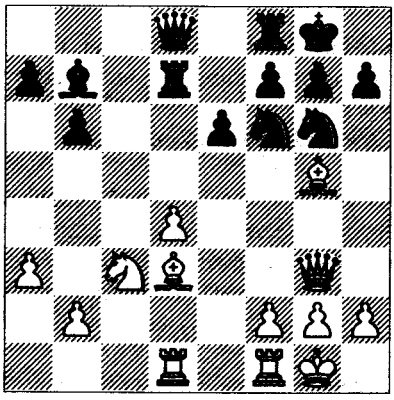
Going into a pin was not the happiest solution, but 30...♔g7 31 ♖f5 or the desperate 30...♖xc2 31 ♖f5 ♖xf2 32 ♘g4 ♖xg2 33 ♖xf4 ♖xa2 looks inadequate as well.

31 ♖f5

and Black's efforts to save the game were doomed.

The other large group of middlegame positions are those in which a pawn sacrifice tends towards simplifications and a favourable endgame.

W



Kasparov – Psakhis
La Manga (6) 1990

A superficial look at the position might suggest that White should be worried about his prospects. The isolated d-pawn is shaky, and the square in front of it is fully controlled by Black. Retreating to passive defence by 18 ♗e3 would mean the utter defeat of his opening strategy, while the energetic 18 h4, hoping for 18...♖xd4 19 h5 ♘xh5 20 ♕e3, would be met by the quiet 18...♕b8, offering favourable simplifications. White wriggles out of an apparent predicament in a fine manner:

18 d5! exd5

The first point of the sacrifice lies in the fact that Black is forced to take with the pawn, closing the bishop's diagonal. 18...♗xd5 19 ♗b5 is most unpleasant: 19...♖d6 loses outright to 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♘e4, while 19...♖c7 20 ♘xd5 exd5 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 22 ♕b3 and 19...♖b7 20 ♘xd5 exd5 21 ♗c6 ♖b8 22 ♗xd5 are difficult for Black to defend.

19 ♗f5 ♖e7 20 h4

How a modest pawn sacrifice can transform a position! Black, who was exerting strong pressure on the semi-open d-file is now vulnerable on that same file, while the advancing h-pawn threatens to settle the issue quickly.

20...♕c7 21 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 22 ♖fe1

By moving to an active position on the open file, a later ♘b5 is prepared.

22...♖e7?

A moment of illusion: running away from ♘b5 does not prevent it. Given that the d5-pawn cannot be further supported by 22...♖d8 because of 23 ♘e4 ♖c6 24 h5 ♘f8 25 h6, annotators recommended Black should try to clarify the situation on the kingside by 22...h6. 22...♗c8 is less appealing due to 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf5 24 ♘xd5, but in my opinion 22...♖c5!? comes into consideration, when 23 h5 is parried by 23...d4. In any case the text-move is inferior.

23 ♘b5!

By keeping the tension, White is suddenly switching the pressure from d5 to a7, planning to create a pawn-majority on the queenside.

23...♖fe8

23...a6 saves the pawn, but not without consequences: 24 ♘d6 ♗a8 (worse is 24...♗c6 25 ♘c8) 25 ♗xf6 gxf6 26 h5 ♖xe1+ 27 ♖xe1 ♘f4 (or 27...♘e5 28 f4 ♘c4 29 ♘e8) 28 h6 is difficult for Black.

24 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 25 ♗h3 ♗c8

25...♘c8 comes into consideration.

26 ♗xc8 ♖xc8?!

26...♘xc8 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♖xd5 ♔g7 remains difficult for Black, but is certainly tougher

than the game continuation. Ceding a pawn majority is much worse than giving up a worthless isolated pawn. However, Black's time-trouble is a credible explanation.

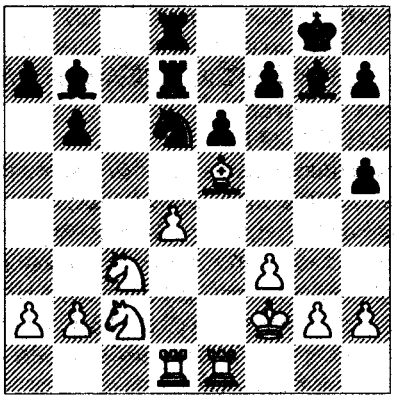
27 ♘xa7 ♖c2 28 b4 ♔f8 29 ♗e3 ♘f5

Or 29...♘d7 30 ♗f4.

30 ♗xb6

Black has no compensation at all for White's passed pawns on the queenside.

When analysing Kasparov's victory over Psakhis, an old game suddenly occurred to me...



W

Kotov – Novotelnov
Moscow (Chigorin mem) 1947

In playing 24...♘e8-d6, Black planned optimistically to increase the pressure on the d4-pawn, instead of thinking how to blockade it.

25 d5! exd5 26 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 27 ♘d4!

The point of the sacrificial idea. Sooner or later White will pick up one of the loose black pawns, but in the meantime the d5-pawn is efficiently blockaded, and the b7-bishop hemmed in, while the powerful blockader sits on d4 in the middle of the board.

27...♔f6 28 ♘ce2 ♘f5 29 ♘f4 ♘g7?!

Black is reluctant to give up the h5-pawn, but clinging to his material advantage leaves him passive. 29...h4 is better.

30 h4 ♖e7 31 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 32 ♖e1+ ♔d7

32...♔d6 33 ♘b5+ ♔d7 34 ♖c1 leads to the loss of the a7-pawn.

33 ♖e5

Provoking ...f6 (33...♔d6 is bad due to 34 ♖g5), which denies the e6-square to the black knight.

33...f6 34 ♖e2 ♖c8 35 ♖d2

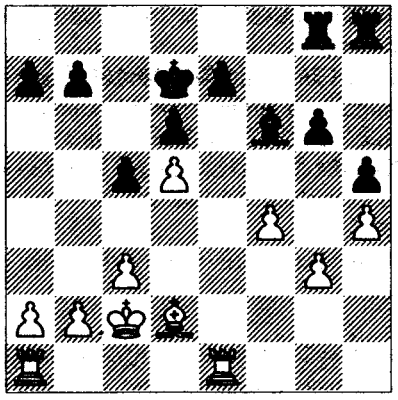
White threatens simply 36 ♘b5 a6 37 ♘c3, establishing material equality while keeping the superior pawn-structure. The d5-pawn is doomed.

35...a6 36 ♘de2 ♔e7 37 ♘c3 d4 38 ♖xd4 ♘f5

This will lose another pawn, but one cannot play this endgame keeping the knight at g7.

39 ♖b4 b5 40 a4 ♖d8 41 axb5 a5 42 ♖c4 ♖d2+ 43 ♔e1 ♖d7 44 ♖c5 ♘g3 45 b6

and Black could have resigned at once without remorse.



B

Beliavsky – Timman
Belfort 1988

White has just played 22 h2-h4, preventing Black's kingside counterplay, but that day Timman was belligerent...

22...b5 23 a4 b4!? 24 cxb4 cxb4 25 ♗xb4 ♖c8+

Now we understand better the motives behind the pawn sacrifice. Black manages to activate his rooks and give his bishop more scope. The weakness of the d5-pawn enters the calculation as well as the awkward position of the white king.

26 ♗c3

If 26 ♔b3, then obviously 26...♖b8.

26...♖c5 27 ♖ad1 ♖b8 28 ♖e3

28 ♖e4 would justify 28...♖xb2+ 29 ♔xb2 ♖xc3, after which the kingside pawns become shaky.

28...♖b4 29 ♖de1

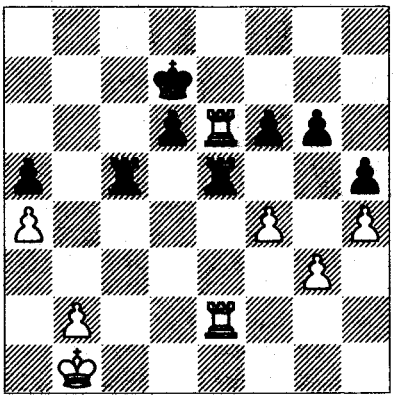
Clever defence: 29...♖xa4 would be met by 30 ♔b3 followed by 31 ♗xf6. On the contrary,

the crude 29 ♖a1 would invite trouble after 29...♖d4.

29...a5 30 ♖1e2 ♖d4 31 ♔b1 ♖dxd5 32 ♗xf6 exf6 33 ♖e6?!

33 ♖e7+ ♔c6 34 ♖f7 is indispensable.

33...♖e5! *(D)*



Beliavsky obviously overlooked this strong rejoinder. All of a sudden the game moves into a simpler form of rook endgame which brings difficulties to White in spite of its apparent simplicity.

34 fxe5

On 34 ♖2xe5 fxe5 35 ♖xg6 e4 the passed pawn is quick.

34...♔xe6 35 exf6+

After 35 exd6+ ♔xd6, Black's mobile formation on the kingside guarantees him a clear advantage.

35...♔xf6 36 ♖e3?

It is certain that passive waiting cannot help White. Here he misses his chance, which consists of creating a passed pawn by 36 b4 axb4 (or 36...♖c4 37 b5) 37 ♔b2, when 37...♖c3 38 ♖e4 or 37...d5 38 ♔b3 changes the nature of the endgame essentially.

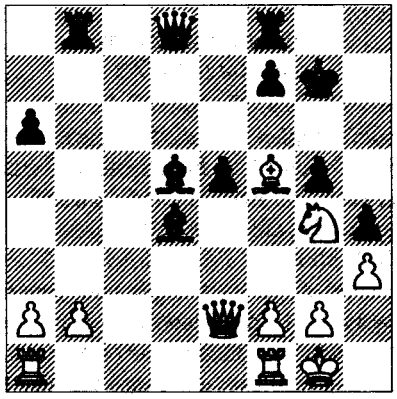
36...d5 37 b3

It is too late for 37 b4 axb4 38 ♔b2 d4, when Black is quicker (39 ♖b3 ♖c4 40 a5 ♔e5).

37...♔f5 38 ♔b2 d4 39 ♖e8 d3 40 ♖d8 ♔e4 41 ♖d6 ♖d5 0-1

Even in positions of apparent simplicity a pawn sacrifice can produce enough energy and initiative to upturn the existing relations.

In all the periods of the 20th century the pawn sacrifice was used as a common means to gain the initiative in all phases of the game. Competing in frequency and richness of motifs there stands only the exchange sacrifice. Found at all the stages of the struggle, and although quite often representing a pseudo-sacrifice or that large grey in-between zone, it mostly satisfies all the requirements of a real sacrifice, by its nature, its aims and its risks. The fruit is often the initiative in its various forms. In the following series of instructive examples we examine their nature and their effects.



Simagin – Gusev
Moscow Ch 1952

Black has weakened his king's position, but his centralized bishops and the pressure on White's queenside pawns apparently keep the balance. However, the next move will change our perception fundamentally:

26 b3!

This exchange sacrifice deals radically with Black's pressure: his counterplay disappears, but his weaknesses remain. White threatens to continue 27 ♖ad1, so refusing the sacrifice would not work.

26...♗xa1 27 ♖xa1 ♕e7 28 ♕xa6 f6 29 ♖c1 ♖f7

29...♖a8 is better.

30 ♘e3 ♗a8?!

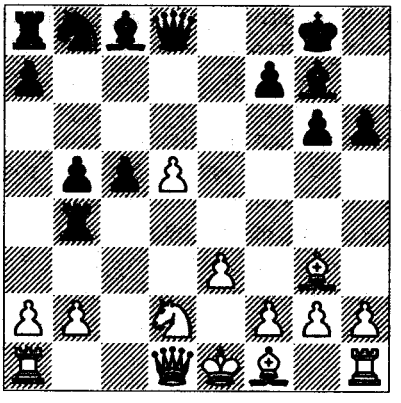
30...♖a8 31 ♕e2 is not appealing either, but the text-move makes things easy for White.

31 ♗e6 ♕a7 32 ♘f5+ ♔h8

Or 32...♔h7 33 ♕e2.

33 ♖c8+ ♔h7 34 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 35 ♖xb8 ♖xa2 36 ♖f8 1-0

W



Petrosian – Nunn
Hastings 1977/8

After a complex opening struggle in the Benoni, Black seemed to have generated enough counter-pressure. However, only until Petrosian found one of his quiet moves he was so fond of...

16 b3!

A move of great strength and simplicity. Good reasons stand behind the exchange sacrifice: without the fianchettoed bishop, g8 will become a more insecure place for the king, while the rook will get stranded on b4.

16...♗xa1

Note that 16...♕xd5 fails to 17 ♗e2 ♗b7 18 ♗f3 ♕d7 19 a3, but 16...c4! 17 bxc4 bxc4 18 ♗xc4 ♗xa1 19 ♕xa1 ♗a6 is the critical line.

17 ♕xa1 ♕xd5 18 a3 ♖g4

On 18...♖xb3 White planned to continue 19 ♗e2 ♖d3 20 ♗f3 ♕d7? 21 ♘e4.

19 ♗e2 ♘c6 20 ♗f3

Precision is important: let the c8-bishop stay where it is.

20...♕e6 21 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 22 0-0

Black has returned the exchange, but Black's king position has been fundamentally weakened. Black's backward development continues to worry him in a new form.

22...♗b7 23 f3 ♕e6 24 ♘e4 ♖d8 25 ♘xc5 ♕xe3+ 26 ♗f2 ♕e7 27 ♖e1 ♕c7 28 h4

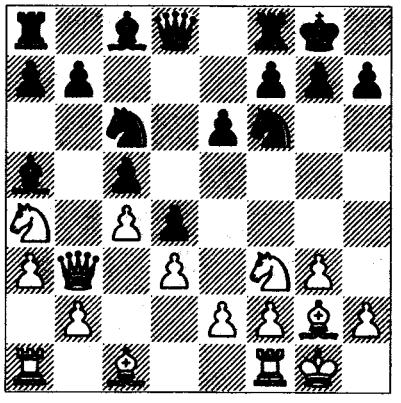
The weakness of the dark complex around the black king could not be exploited at once, but it's an enduring liability, which can be enhanced by the advance of the h-pawn. White will return to the motif soon.

28...h5 29 ♘e4 ♘e7 30 ♘f6+ ♔f8 31 b4

Death comes from c5...

31...♗c8 32 ♘xh5 gxh5 33 ♕h8+ ♘g8 34 ♗c5+ ♖d6 35 ♕e5 1-0

B



Speelman – Seirawan
St John Ct (1) 1988

At the end of the initial phase Black still has difficulties to overcome. The c5-pawn needs immediate protection, but the basic question to answer is how to develop the queenside. 10...♘d7 or 10...♕e7 would meet the bare necessities, but they would do little to meet the strategic requirements. Besides, after the simple 11 ♕c2 Black's central pawn-formation would be exposed to the undermining e3 and eventually b4, when the d7-knight is clumsy and the queen will become exposed on the e-file. Seirawan found a drastic solution:

10...b6!? 11 ♘e5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xa8 ♕e8 13 ♗g2

At first sight it seems that the exchange will cost White an additional price, but then we understand the point: 13...♗d7 would be parried by 14 ♕a2, when 14...♗xa4 is met by 15 b4 ♘c6 16 ♗d2 with the advantage, but 14...♗c6!? comes more into consideration.

13...♘h5

14 ♗f4 would be unpleasant, so Black takes steps to prevent it.

14 ♕d1 ♗d7 15 e3!

By undermining the pawn wedge, White intends to meet 15...♗xa4 with 16 ♕xh5 ♘xd3 17 exd4.

15...♘f6 16 b3?!

16 exd4 is consistent with the previous move; then 16...♗xa4 17 b3 ♗xb3 (worse is

17...♗c3 18 dxe5) 18 ♕xb3 cxd4 19 a4 satisfies White.

16...dxe3 17 ♗xe3 ♗xa4 18 bxa4 ♕d7

As a consequence of erroneous judgement, the d3-pawn has become a weakness on which counterplay can be based.

19 d4 ♘xc4 20 dxc5 ♘xe3 21 fxe3 bxc5 22 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♖ab1 c4!

23...♗b6 would be premature due to 24 a5 ♗xa5 25 ♖b7, but the strong passed pawn provides Black with sufficient play for the exchange.

24 ♖b7 ♘c5

The knight is bound for b3 in support of the passed pawn.

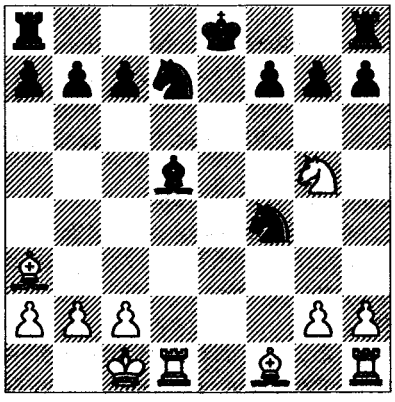
25 ♖xa7 ♗b6 26 ♖a8 ♘b3 27 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 28 ♖e1

Unfortunately 28 ♔f2 does not work because of 28...c3.

28...c3 29 ♗e4 ♘d2 30 ♗b7 ½-½

30...♘b3 31 ♖e2 ♘d2 and 30...♘c4 31 ♔f2 c2 32 ♔e2 ♗xe3 33 ♔d3 both lead to calm waters.

W



Bronstein – Tal
USSR Cht (Riga) 1968

Although it has been forced to the edge of the board, the dark-squared bishop at a3 continues its subversive activity on the diagonal. However, it is not at all clear how White can exploit his lead in development and the unfortunate position of the black king in the centre. Bronstein's solution is still impressive to my eyes even after many decades:

15 g3!! ♗xh1 16 gxf4

White is an exchange and a pawn down, but has kept strong pressure on the exposed enemy king.

16...c5

Closing the critical diagonal counters the threats for the time being and gives Black a breathing space.

17 ♗c4 ♗c6 18 ♘xf7 b5 19 ♘d6+ ♔e7 20 ♘xb5

Black has earned some respite by giving back two pawns, but his king remains exposed.

20...♖hf8 21 ♘d4

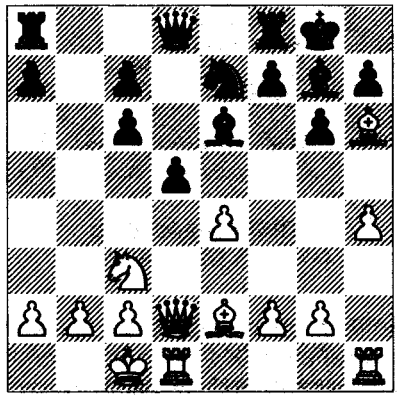
Although sidelined, the a3-bishop takes part in the action. It is the apparently free black bishop which has difficulties about its whereabouts.

21...♗g2 22 ♘e6 ♖f5 23 ♖g1 ♗e4 24 ♘c7 ♖d8 25 ♖xg7+ ♔f6 26 ♖f7+ ♔g6 27 ♖e7 ♘f6 28 ♘e6 ♖c8 29 b3 ♖h5 30 ♘g5 ♗d5 31 ♗d3+ ♔h6 32 ♗b2

By skilfully improving the position of his pieces, White kept Black's counterplay in check until no good replies remained at his disposal. Like in the above examples, the exchange sacrifice emphasized the lead in development and spatial advantage.

No less often it is used to limit the opponent's attacking options and to blunt direct assaults on the king.

B



Liublinsky – Simagin
Moscow 1939

Considering the concentrated pressure on his king's position via the semi-open b-file and the long dark diagonal, White was understandably anxious to eliminate the fianchettoed bishop.

His previous move, 12 ♗e3-h6, apparently served this purpose. The answer came as a surprise:

12...♗h8!

The exchange of bishops would weaken the black king's position and simultaneously diminish the pressure on the white king. There is consistency and logic in Black's refusal to exchange bishops, even though it costs an exchange.

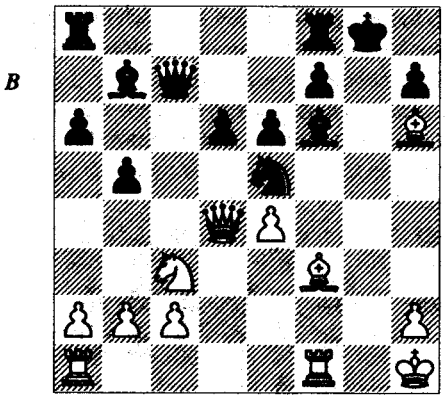
13 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 14 a3?

Positions of this kind are in general too sensitive for unnecessary moves like this. Black is offered a valuable tempo to develop his initiative. 14 ♘a4 is in order.

14...♖b8 15 ♗d3?! c5

What was given for free is taken with pleasure. White's position falls apart.

16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘a4 ♗d7 18 ♕a5 ♗xa4 19 ♕xa4 ♕h6+ 20 f4 ♘xf4 21 ♖d2 ♗xb2+ 22 ♔d1 ♗c3 23 ♖f2 ♖b1# (0-1)



Khasin – Stein
USSR Ch (Tallinn) 1965

Khasin has sacrificed a pawn to attack the black king. When the players reached this position, it seemed that White would prevail: 18...♖fe8 19 ♗h5 would give him a devastating attack. However, 19...♕e7 20 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 21 ♖g1+ ♔h8 isn't completely clear, since 22 ♗g5 can be met by 22...♕f5. Anyway, Stein continued cold-bloodedly:

18...♔h8! 19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8

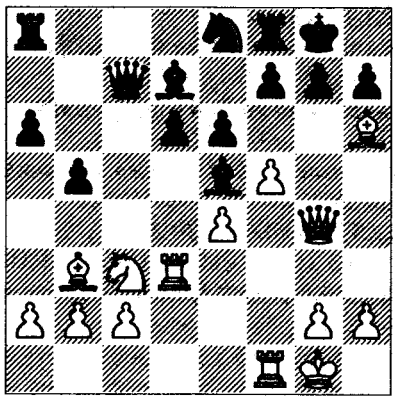
This time the exchange sacrifice has a healing effect on the critical position. The pressure on the kingside is suddenly tamed and the black bishop-pair acquires new significance.

20 ♖ad1 ♖d8 21 ♗g2 ♗g7 22 ♕f2 ♖g8 23 ♕h4?

Living in the past, White still hopes for active play. The defensive 23 ♖de1 followed by 24 ♘d1 seems more appropriate to the situation on the board.

23...f5! 24 ♖de1 ♘c4

and Black seized a winning initiative.



Morozevich – Kasparov
Astana 2001

Facing a kingside storm, Black replied boldly but reasonably:

17...b4

As a matter of fact, it was an offer of an exchange sacrifice which White wisely decided to decline for the moment.

18 f6

18 fxe6 ♗xe6 19 ♗xe6 bxc3 20 ♗d5 would be met by the strong 20...cxb2, when all the pressure disappears while the black passed pawn becomes a real nuisance. However, it seemed that the exchange could be won in a safe way.

18...g6 19 ♘e2 a5!

This is consistent with 17...b4. The f6-pawn is a nuisance, no doubt, but grabbing it would open the king's position to an attack and cause more damage; 19...♘xf6 20 ♕h4 is hardly tenable.

20 ♗xf8?!

Capturing material was a big temptation, but the patient alternative 20 ♕h4 a4 21 ♗g5 h5

(otherwise 22 ♕h6 is most unpleasant) 22 g4 would offer realistic attacking prospects. It would certainly give White enough compensation for the sacrificed bishop.

20...♔xf8 21 ♕h4 a4

Given that the h7-pawn will cost the f6-pawn and release the king from its temporary prison, this is quite appealing, but the preventive 21...h5! attracts attention, all the more so because the aggressive 22 g4 would be well met by 22...♕c5+ 23 ♔h1 ♗c6; this throws more doubt on the impatient 20 ♗xf8?!.

22 ♕xh7 ♕a7+

Kasparov considered 22...♘xf6 23 ♕h8+ ♔e7!? 24 ♕xa8 axb3 25 cxb3 ♕b6+ 26 ♔h1 ♗c6, when the second exchange sacrifice seems sufficiently rewarding. However, in the heat of the battle this time it might have looked to him like stretching it too far and by defending the rook he excluded the line.

23 ♔h1 ♘xf6 24 ♕h6+ ♔e7 25 ♗c4 ♕c5

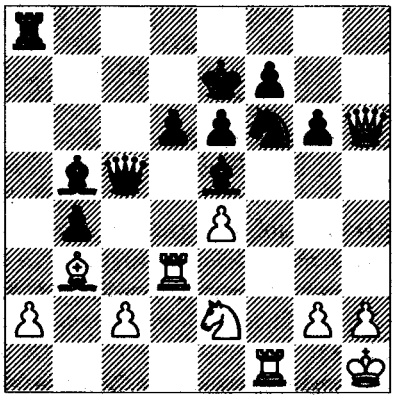
I like 25...♗c6 less due to 26 ♘g3.

26 b3 axb3 27 ♗xb3

27 axb3 looks to me preferable and perfectly reasonable.

27...♗b5 *(D)*

W



28 ♘f4

In a position apparently starting to deteriorate, White is compelled to look for safety.

28...♗xf4 29 ♕xf4 ♕e5 30 h3 g5

Exchanges would favour Black now, but after 30 h3 he probably felt the king has become vulnerable on h1. The fact that 31 ♕d2 could be met by 31...♖b8 (not 31...♘xe4 32 ♕xb4 ♗xd3? 33 ♕b7+) reassured him.

31 ♕f2 g4 32 ♕b6

Perhaps it was time to become cautious. 32 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6 33 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 34 ♖xd6 leads to level play.

32...♘d7 33 ♕f2 ♘f6 34 ♕b6 ♖h8 35 ♖xd6?

The scene has become slippery. Feeling it after Black's refusal to repeat moves, White decided to call it quits and simplify, but he chose the wrong way out. 35 ♕c7+ ♘d7 36 ♖xd6 would provoke 36...♖xh3+ 37 gxh3 ♕xe4+ with level play. After the text-move the game moves into an endgame that is favourable for Black.

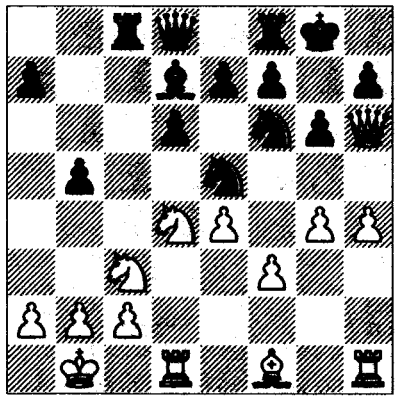
35...♕xd6 36 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 37 ♖xf6 ♖h7!

It is probable that White overlooked this subtle move, which gives Black the upper hand in a simplified ending due to his centralized king.

38 ♔h2 ♔e5 39 ♖f2 gxh3 40 gxh3 ♗c6

Black's small but centralized force has taken charge of the game. Thus the sacrifice led first to dynamic equality, which was slowly undermined by the continuous initiative.

B



Boleslavsky – Geller
Zurich Ct 1953

The early middlegame brought about this tense position in which both sides have started their attacks. Black has advanced his b-pawn, while White has advanced his kingside pawns. After the exchange of the dark-squared bishops only one step – h5 – separates him from his goal. Black cannot wait any longer...

15...♖xc3! 16 bxc3 ♕a5

The planned 17 h5 is too slow now. The queen must retreat to defend the king. A crucial moment of respite has been obtained.

17 ♕e3 ♕a3

Forcing the opening of the b-file by 17...♘c4 would be pointless, because the king finds a secure refuge on a1. By threatening a most unpleasant pin by 17...b4, Black achieves more.

18 h5 b4

18...♖c8 would be met by 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♘b3.

19 ♕c1 ♕xc3 20 ♕b2 ♖c8 21 hxg6

White prefers to exchange queens at b2 rather than at c3.

21...♕xb2+

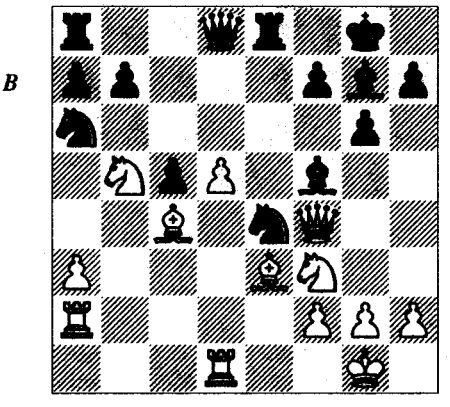
Note that the inappropriate 21...hxg6 would be punished by 22 ♕c1, quickly moving the queen into the attack.

22 ♔xb2 hxg6

The timely sacrifice prevented White's attack, and kept the balance. White went wrong at this point:

23 a3? bxa3+ 24 ♔xa3 ♘xf3

Now Black is even winning.



Polugaevsky – Korchnoi
USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1960

Having sacrificed a pawn in a Grünfeld, White is seeking compensation in his strongly supported central passed pawn. Something has to be done against its advance and the cramping effect which would result from it. Korchnoi came up with an extraordinary defensive idea...

18...♘f6!

By retreating the knight, Black threatens 19...♖e4 and emphasizes the exposed position of the white queen at f4, but releases the control of the sensitive d6-square. A complex tactical struggle follows...

19 ♘d6 ♘h5 20 ♘xb7

White proposes 20...♘xf4 21 ♘xd8 ♖axd8 22 ♗xf4, when his expectations based on the passed pawn would be fulfilled. However, Black refuses to comply.

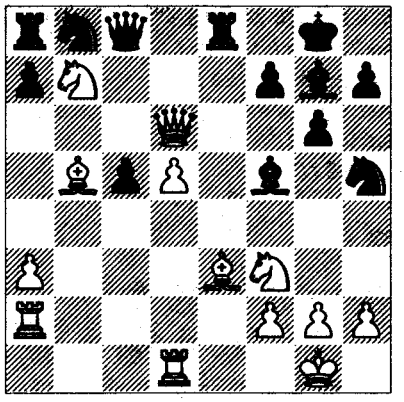
20...♕c8 21 ♕d6

21 ♘d6 would be answered by 21...♕b8 (not 21...♕d7 22 ♗b5) with an advantage.

21...♘b8!

Black attacks by retreating! The b7-knight is *en prise*, while Black threatens to trap the queen in the middle of the board by 22...♗f8; for this reason 22 ♘xc5 is not available. 22 h3 would prepare the queen's retreat and indirectly protect material by threatening g4, but 22...♕xb7 23 g4 ♗b1 wins for Black.

22 ♗b5!? *(D)*



Under pressure, Polugaevsky does not lose hope. This resourceful move plans to meet 22...♗f8 with the queen sacrifice 23 ♗xe8! ♗xd6 24 ♘xd6.

22...♖xe3!

At the height of tension Black strikes with an exchange sacrifice, which facilitates the quick mobilization of his forces.

23 fxe3 ♗f8

Less convincing is 23...♕xb7 24 ♗c6 ♘xc6 25 dxc6 ♕b3 26 c7.

24 ♕d8 ♕xb7 25 ♗c4 ♘c6

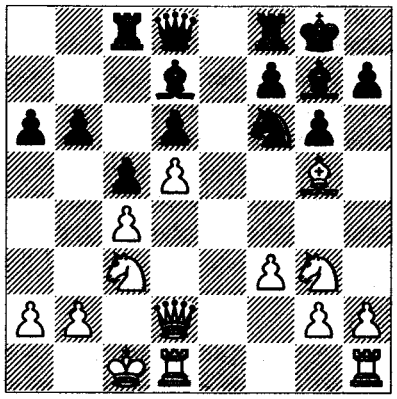
25...♘d7 26 ♕h4 ♘hf6 has been proposed as a safer way. In any case, the exchange sacrifice has neutralized White's pressure and turned the tide against him.

26 ♕h4

26 dxc6 obviously does not work due to 26...♖xd8 27 cxb7 ♖xd1+ 28 ♔f2 ♖b1.

26...♘a5 27 ♗f1 ♕b3

Black has a clearly winning position.



Hort – Gligorić
Amsterdam 1970

Emerging from the opening, Black's prospects looked cheerless. The pin of the f6-knight, which can be intensified by ♕f4, is very unpleasant. What is worse, there is no counterplay in sight. However, Gligorić had a subtle defensive idea...

17...♖e8! 18 ♕f4 ♖e5 19 ♘ce4

Gligorić was more afraid of the preparatory 19 h4, which he planned to meet by 19...h5 20 ♘ce4 ♖xg5 21 hxg5 ♘e8.

19...♖xg5!

Assessing correctly that his difficulties are caused by the pin and that no counterplay can be undertaken as long as the pin is functional, Black eliminates the devil at g5.

20 ♕xg5 b5!

The first sign of awakening.

21 ♘xd6?!

When capturing the pawn, White set a subtle trap: the expected 21...♕f8 would be met by the shrewd 22 ♘xc8! ♗h6 23 f4! with a large advantage. However, he just forced the black rook to its best strategic place. Therefore, 21 ♖he1 is better.

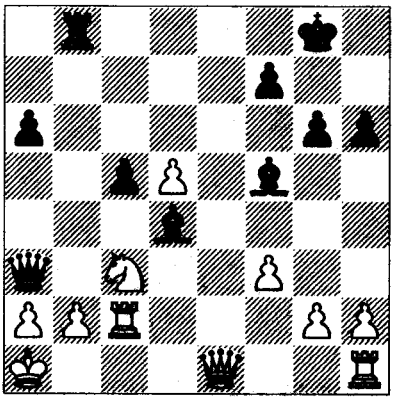
21...♖b8! 22 ♘ge4 h6 23 ♕e3 ♘xe4 24 ♘xe4 bxc4

The consequence of the greedy 21 ♘xd6 is here to see: Black's concentrated pressure on the b-file and the long diagonal gives him a strong initiative. The exchange sacrifice has been fruitful indeed!

25 ♖d2 ♕a5 26 ♔b1

Not a nice place to choose for the king's refuge, but still good. I do not think that extreme measures are necessary as yet, but White could resort to 26 ♕a3 ♗xb2+ 27 ♕xb2 ♖xb2 28 ♖xb2 ♕a3 29 ♔b1; for instance, 29...♕d3+ 30 ♔a1 c3 (or 30...♔g7 31 ♘xc5) 31 ♖b8+ ♔g7 32 ♖c1 or 29...c3 30 ♖b8+ (not 30 ♖b3 c2+ nor 30 ♖c2 ♗a4 31 ♖xc3 ♕b4+ 32 ♔a1 f5) 30...♔g7 31 ♖c1.

26...c3 27 ♖c2 ♗d4 28 ♕e1 ♕a3 29 ♘xc3 ♗f5 30 ♔a1 *(D)*



The defence is based on this fragile idea, but living under the strong pressure of the bishop-pair nothing better is at hand.

30...♖xb2 31 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 32 ♕c1 c4 33 d6!

The much-recommended 33 g4 ♗d7 (worse is 33...♗d3 34 d6) 34 ♔b1 is not very convincing in view of 34...♗xb2 35 ♕xb2 ♕xf3. Although in some time-trouble, Hort understood that his passed pawn represented his only chance.

33...♗f6 34 ♖d1 c3 35 ♖c2

White can win the queen by 35 ♖b8+ ♔g7 36 ♕xa3, but for compensation lose the game after 36...c2+.

35...♕a4 36 d7! ♗xd7 37 g4?

Having skilfully defended a difficult position, White misses his chance in time-trouble: 37 ♖xd7 would create an impenetrable fortress. The passed pawn did its job, but it was not understood.

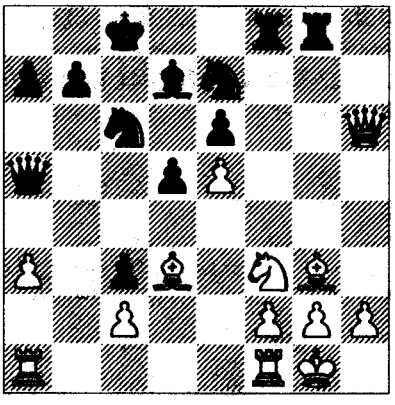
37...♗e6 38 ♖e1 ♗b3 39 ♖ee2 ♗xa2

An amusing end to a fine game.

40 ♕xh6 ♗c4+ 41 ♔b1 ♗xe2 0-1

Like in previous examples, the exchange sacrifice lessened the pressure from the attacking units and seized the initiative.

Another fruitful effect of the exchange sacrifice is the enduring damage done to the opponent's pawn-formation, which often limits his active options.



Galkin – Khalifman
Wijk aan Zee 2000

Playing against Khalifman in the same tournament, Judit Polgar was more cautious and did not take the f7-pawn, but White's position proved passive all the same. Galkin grabbed what he could and his 18 ♕g7-h6 showed his ambitions. However, as a consequence, he had to face an exchange sacrifice and strong counterplay.

18...♖xf3! 19 gxf3 ♘d4

It would be nice to eliminate the e5-pawn, but 19...♘xe5 would fail to 20 ♗h7. However, the point of the sacrifice was not to gain full material compensation, but to set up long-term positional pressure on White's damaged structure. For the time being it's important to establish a strong knight on f5.

20 ♕f4

20 ♕h7 ♕d8 is not very productive for White.

20...♘ef5 21 ♔h1

If it were not for the possibility of ...♘e2+ White would go in for simplifications by 21 ♗xf5, but his difficulties stem from the fact that the closed position favours the black knights. 21 ♖fd1 would be met by 21...♕c5. On 21 ♖fb1, which prevents 21...♗b5 owing to 22 ♖xb5 ♘xb5 23 ♗xf5 and considers 21...♕c5 22 ♖b4 a5 23 ♖xd4 in order to lessen the pressure by a counter-sacrifice, Black has the stronger 21...♖f8.

21...♗b5!

By eliminating the light-squared bishop, Black strengthens his knights' grip.

22 ♖fd1 ♗xd3 23 ♖xd3 ♕c5

The simple 23...♘c6 also deserves attention, but the c5-square somehow belongs to the queen: at a propitious moment it makes possible ...♖f8 and after the elimination of the g3-bishop the queen can penetrate to f2.

24 ♕c1

24 ♖ad1 would be answered by 24...♘e2 25 ♕b4 ♘exg3+ 26 fxg3 ♕f2 with a strong attack for Black.

24...♔b8

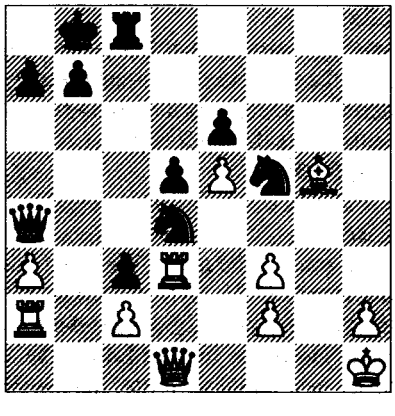
Such quiet moves often demonstrate the opponent's impotence.

25 ♕d1 ♖c8 26 ♗f4 ♘c6

The bishop's life remains miserable.

27 ♕e1 ♕c4 28 ♗g5 ♘cd4 29 ♕d1 ♕a4 30 ♖a2 ♕c4 31 ♖a1 ♕a4 32 ♖a2 *(D)*

On 32 f4 Khalifman had in mind 32...♕xc2 33 ♕xc2 (worse is 33 ♖xd4 ♕xf2 34 ♖d3 c2 35 ♕c1 ♕e2, etc.) 33...♘xc2 34 ♖c1 ♘xa3 35 ♖dxc3 ♘c4, when Black's passed pawns are a major asset.



32...♘b5 33 f4?!

Shutting out the bishop weakens the defence to the point where it becomes untenable. There is nothing better than waiting.

33...♕e4+ 34 f3

34 ♔g1 is not very helpful due to the reply 34...♖g8.

34...♕a4 35 ♕e1 d4

Vacating the d5-square for occupation by the queen's knight.

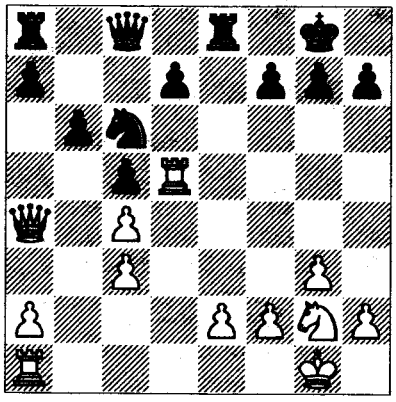
36 h4

Note that 36 ♕e4 would not prevent 36...♘c7 because 37 ♖xc3? loses to 37...♕b5.

36...♘c7 37 ♕e4? 0-1

This blunder cut it short, but the position gave little hope anyway. After ...♘d5 at an appropriate moment Black can move his forces into a kingside attack too quickly to allow resistance.

W



Benko – Keres
Los Angeles 1963

18 ♘e3

The knight moves towards the splendid outpost at d5. Unfortunately, it was a hasty decision...

18...♖xe3! 19 fxe3 ♕e8

As a result of the sacrifice, in two moves the passive black set-up has awoken, detecting the weakness at e3.

20 ♕c2

On 20 ♔f2 Keres considered 20...♘e5 and 20...♕e6. After 20...♘e5 (slower is 20...♕e6 21 ♖ad1 ♖e8 22 ♖1d3 ♘e5 23 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 24 ♕xd7) 21 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♕xd7 (or 22 ♖d1 ♕h5) 22...♕f6+ 23 ♔g2 ♖d8 Black is better.

20...♕xe3+ 21 ♔h1

21 ♔f1 leaves the king more exposed to 21...♘e5 and ...♘g4.

21...♘e5 22 ♖f1 ♖e8 23 ♖f4 f6

In expectation of 24 ♕d2 or 24 ♕e4 the king needs an outlet.

24 ♕e4?!

24 ♖e4 or 24 ♖d1 is better. The text-move overlooks the strong prepared reply.

24...♘g6! 25 ♕xe3 ♖xe3

Although the queens are off the board, a step deeper into the endgame White's position has deteriorated. 26 ♖f2 ♘e5 or 26 ♖f3 ♖xe2 27 ♖xd7 ♘e5 only brings further worries. Nothing can change the fact that his pawn-structure is damaged for good. Therefore, he places his hopes on a rook endgame.

26 ♖xd7 ♘xf4 27 gxf4 ♖xe2 28 ♖xa7 ♖f2!

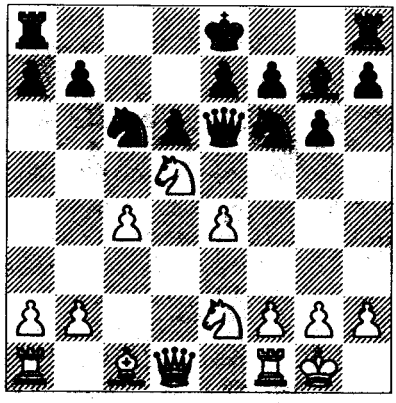
Black achieves a winning advantage by creating a kingside pawn-majority.

29 ♖b7 ♖xf4 30 ♖xb6 ♖xc4 31 ♖b3 ♔f7 32 ♔g2 g5

White has no good answer to the inexorable advance of the black pawns.

The sacrifices offered in the last two games were temporary, while the damage done to the pawn-structures was lasting. Generally speaking, perusing a large specimen of tournament games one comes to the conclusion that exchange sacrifices have much to do with the pawn-formations of a particular position and the activity generated by them.

B



Rublevsky – Motylev
Yugoslavia 2000

You will no doubt recognize this position from the game Kasparov-World, Internet 1999. Black must react energetically, because after

11...♖c8 12 f3 White's spatial advantage would be difficult to challenge.

11...♕xe4!? 12 ♘c7+ ♔d7 13 ♘xa8 ♕xc4 14 ♘b6+ axb6 15 ♘c3 e6 16 ♗e3 ♘d5

This is an interesting way to keep in check White's potential threats. The king has stayed in the centre, but is protected well by the pawn-mass and minor pieces. However, keeping the king in the centre while the board is full of pieces always involves risk.

17 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♕c2

This is certainly more difficult to meet than the exchange of queens, which would pose Black no difficulties whatever.

18...b5 19 ♖ad1

19 ♖fd1 is apparently more logical, but after 19...♕c4 20 ♕d2 d5 Black is OK.

19...♕c4 20 ♕d2 ♕b4

The immediate 20...d5 is stronger.

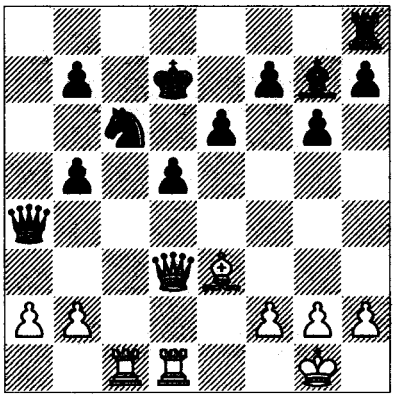
21 ♕d3 d5 22 ♖c1

The b2-pawn is taboo, because its fall would open the b-file for unpleasant pressure, so White can afford to ignore the threat to it. 22 b3 ♖a8 is worse anyway.

22...♕a4 23 ♖fd1?! *(D)*

This is now rather pointless and not only because it allows 23...♗xb2, when the desirable 24 ♖b1 would be met by 24...♘e5 25 ♕e2 ♘c4. The point of the previous 22 ♖c1 should be 23 ♖c5 b4 24 ♖b5, forcing the opponent into defence.

B



23...b4 24 ♗c5 ♗xb2 25 ♖b1 ♗c3 26 ♕f3 f5 27 ♕f4 ♗e5 28 ♕h4

The alternative was 28 ♕h6 and if 28...♕xa2, then 29 ♗xb4. The text-move keeps an eye on e7 and is directed against 28...♕xa2, when 29 ♖xb4 is available. However, Black continues consistently, trying to exchange queens, which would give him an easy game.

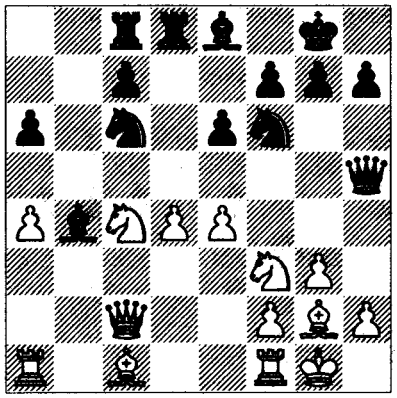
28...♕c2 29 ♗xb4 ♕e4 30 ♗e7?

30 ♕xe4 fxe4 31 ♗c5 is correct, because the bishop will now be sidelined on h4, and it will cost precious time to bring it back into play.

30...♕xh4 31 ♗xh4 ♘a5!

By heading to c4, the knight will close the files and create pleasant conditions for Black in the endgame.

W



Korchnoi – Tal
Moscow Ct (6) 1968

Having built a full pawn-centre, White decided he could harass the black queen stranded in a tight place on h5.

18 h3

This disregards the pressure on the d4-pawn. His calculation was simple: 18...♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 20 ♗e3 ♖dd8 21 g4 ♕h4 22 ♘e5 brings in more than what is given. However, Black had an alternative...

18...♖xd4!

For the exchange Black gets more than a pawn: he starts to breathe again.

19 g4

The idea of this *zwischenzug* is to prevent the later ...♘e2+.

19...♕c5 20 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♕d3 ♖d8 22 ♗b2 e5 23 ♖fc1 ♕e7 24 ♗xd4

Played reluctantly, but the queen feels uncomfortable, while the powerful centralized knight has an unpleasant squeezing effect on White's position.

24...♖xd4 25 ♕g3?!

This attempt to disturb the harmony of the black pieces by attacking the e5-pawn fails to produce anything else but the following imperturbable reaction. e2 was a more natural place for the queen.

23...♕e6!

A fine way to defend the e5-pawn.

26 ♕b3 a5 27 ♕c2 c5 28 ♘e3?!

Better is 28 f3 followed by 29 ♗f1.

28...♗c6 29 ♖d1 g6

The e4-pawn was safe because Black's back rank was unprotected.

30 f3 c4!

Having failed to prop up the point c4, White has facilitated this crushing advance, after which Black's superiority on the dark squares tells in decisive manner.

31 ♕e2

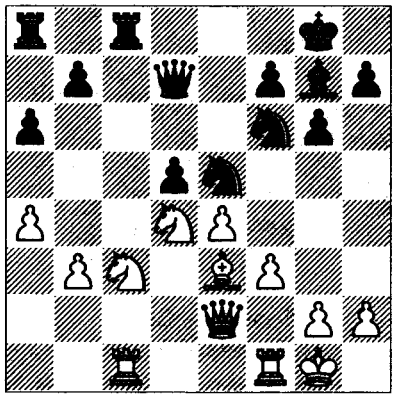
Of course, 31 ♖xd4 exd4 32 ♘xc4 loses to 32...♗c3.

31...♗c5 32 ♔h1 c3 33 ♘c2 ♖xa4 34 ♕d3 ♗d4 35 f4 ♖xa1 36 ♖xa1 ♗b6 37 ♖b1 ♗c5 38 f5?!

The immediate 38 ♕xc3 is better.

38...♕d7 39 ♕xc3 ♘xe4 40 ♕xe5 ♗d6 41 ♕xa5 ♗c7 42 ♕b4 ♕d3 0-1

W



Sadvakasov – Kasparov
Astana 2001

An energetic central counterblow with ...d5 has opened the c-file and put White on trial. After the seemingly simple 17 ♘xd5 (the correct order of moves, because 17 exd5? fails to 17...♖xc3 18 ♖xc3 ♘xd5 19 ♖c2 ♘xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♘g4) 17...♘xd5 18 exd5 ♕xd5 he remains under pressure. Sadvakasov was obliged to adopt stronger measures...

17 f4 ♖xc3! 18 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 19 ♖c2 ♘g4

The calculation in itself was not so difficult: the material for the exchange was adequate, if compensated further by the existing pressure on the white centre. The doubts may have been caused by the open c-file and the inexorable penetration of the white rook to the seventh rank.

20 ♖fc1 h5

A useful move: the knight is protected, the queen is freed, and most importantly the king gets a refuge at h7 to flee from checks.

21 ♖c7 ♕d6

This was prepared by 20...h5; the b7-pawn is indirectly protected.

22 ♘f3

22 ♖xb7? loses to 22...♗xd4 23 ♗xd4 ♕xf4. Instead, 22 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 23 ♖xc8+ is not especially worrying for Black; for example, 23...♔h7 24 ♘f3 ♗f6 25 h3 ♘g3.

22...♗f6

The pawn thrust in the centre is not supported well; 22...d4 would fail to 23 ♗d2 d3 24 ♕xe4 ♕b6+ 25 ♗e3.

23 g3?!

23 h3 is more cautious, clarifying the position as soon as possible. However, White prefers to protect the f4-pawn and to create more space for his king. Maintaining the tension can only favour his opponent.

23...♕e6

By threatening 24...♘xg3, Black provokes simplifications which prove quite pleasant for him.

24 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 25 ♘xd4 ♕b6 26 ♕d3

26 ♕b2 looks menacing, but apart from 27 b4, which can be stopped, it in fact threatens nothing on the long diagonal.

26...♘gf2 27 ♕e3 ♘g4 28 ♕d3 h4

Feeling safe, Black can harass White by creating a potential weakness at g3.

29 a5

29 ♔g2 is vulnerable to 29...h3+; for instance, 30 ♔g1 ♘xg3 and now 31 hxg3 h2+ 32 ♔g2 h1♕+ or 31 ♕xg3 ♕xd4+ 32 ♔f1 ♘e3+ 33 ♔e2 ♘f5 34 ♖c8+ ♔g7.

29...♕f6

29...♕xa5 is perfectly sound. 30 gxh4 ♕b6 suits Black well.

30 ♘f3

The pawn sacrifice is not necessary, but it's not as bad as it may look at first sight. White is hoping to exchange major pieces, win the b7-pawn and settle the issue on the queenside.

30...hxg3 31 hxg3 ♘xg3 32 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 33 ♖xc8+ ♔g7 34 ♔g2 ♘f5 35 ♕c3 ♘ge3+

More natural is 35...d4 at once, keeping other options at his disposal. Besides, after 36 ♕c5 ♘d6 37 ♖c7 there is 37...d3, because the e3-knight would not hang.

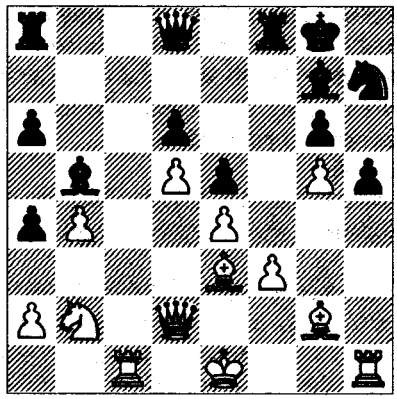
36 ♔g1 d4 37 ♕c5 ♘e7?

37...♘d6 is correct.

½-½

Considering the opponent and the long defence, White's decision is psychologically understandable. However, in blocking the a3-f8 diagonal, Black has left the d4-pawn exposed to 38 ♖d8, when 38...♕xf4 39 ♕xd4+ ♕xd4 40 ♘xd4 would have caused painful moments. For instance, 40...♔f6 41 ♖d7 (41 ♖b8 is worse due to 41...♘3f5 42 ♘xf5 ♘c6) 41...♘3d5 (or 41...♘7d5 42 ♖xb7 ♔e5 43 ♘c6+ ♔d6 44 ♘b8) 42 ♖xb7 when the pawn-majority is superior to the slow black couple on the other wing.

B



Avery – Gligorić
Lone Pine 1971

Against the simple King's Indian logic of his opponent, White applied an inconsistent series of feebly related moves. The next move demonstrates that White is already in serious trouble.

21...♖f4!

The g5-pawn is thus doomed, but it's not only a pawn for the exchange – the King's Indian bishop wakes up on the open diagonal with great strength and another feature characterizes the position from now on: a black pawn-majority has been created on the kingside.

22 ♗xf4 exf4 23 ♘d3 ♕xg5 24 ♖c2

If 24 ♘xf4, then 24...♗h6 wins material.

24...♖f8 25 ♔d1 a3

No peace for the king.

26 ♘c1 ♗a4 27 ♘b3 ♗b2 28 ♖xb2

On the more active 28 ♖c6 Gligorić intended to reply 28...♗xb3+ 29 axb3 ♕e5 30 ♖xa6 ♗c3 31 ♕d3 ♗xb4 with a clear advantage.

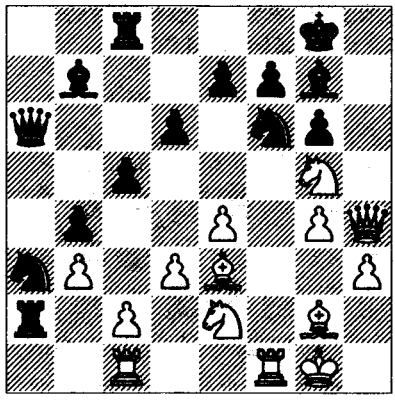
28...axb2 29 ♕xb2 ♖b8 30 ♕d2 ♘f6 31 ♔c1 ♗xb3 32 axb3 ♕e5 33 ♔b1 g5

It took time, but finally the majority starts to march forward. Supported by the superior knight, it will decide the issue.

34 ♖c1 g4 35 ♖c7 ♘h7 36 ♔a2 ♘g5 37 ♕e2 h4 38 fxg4 ♖f8 39 ♗f3 ♕d4 40 ♖c4 ♕e3 0-1

The counterplay gradually grew and became stronger; the exchange sacrifices paid off in the end in all our illustrative games. However, it is not rare for the exchange sacrifice to be an introduction to a direct assault on the king.

W



Spassky – Geller
Sukhumi Ct (6) 1968

While Black was developing his initiative on the queenside, White was building up an attack on the kingside. At the crucial moment Black's 'successful' but slow reaction was dramatically punished:

23 ♖xf6! exf6 24 ♕h7+ ♔f8 25 ♘xf7!

Having vacated the f8-square for the king, Black felt secure, but he must have seen this shocking move too late.

25...♖xc2

25...♔xf7 26 ♗h6 ♖g8 loses to 27 ♘f4.

26 ♗h6

Blow after blow. Black threw all his power into his queenside play, leaving his king unprotected.

26...♖xc1+

Or: 26...♗xh6 27 ♘xh6 ♔e8 28 ♘g8!, mating; 26...♖xe2 27 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 28 ♘g5! fxg5 29 ♗xg5.

27 ♘xc1 ♔xf7

As Geller himself demonstrated, 27...♗xh6 fails to 28 ♘xh6 ♔e8 29 ♘g8! ♔f8 30 ♘e7.

28 ♕xg7+

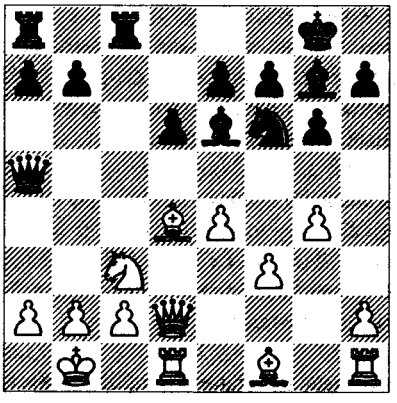
The king is at the mercy of the attacking units.

28...♔e8

28...♔e6 also loses to 29 g5.

29 g5 f5 30 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 31 ♕f7+ ♔c6 32 exf5+ 1-0

W



Altgauzen – Simagin
Moscow Ch 1940

13 h4?

White underrated the threats to his king, and played this careless move in the belief that 13...♖xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♕xa2+ 15 ♔c1 does not work for Black. His surprise must have been great...

13...♖xc3! 14 ♕xc3 ♕xa2+ 15 ♔c1 ♗xg4!

The point of the combination: Black threatens 16...♗h6+, obliging White to dance to black music.

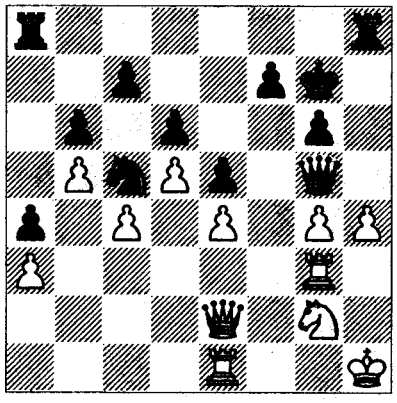
16 fxg4 ♕a1+ 17 ♔d2 ♘xe4+ 18 ♔e1 ♘xc3!

An additional finesse.

19 ♖xa1 ♗xd4 20 ♗g2 ♘b5

Black is much better.

B



Guimard – Euwe
Groningen 1946

Guimard had been hesitant all through the game, and Euwe active. Having blocked the queenside, he opened the position on the other wing.

30...♖xh4+! 31 ♘xh4 ♖h8

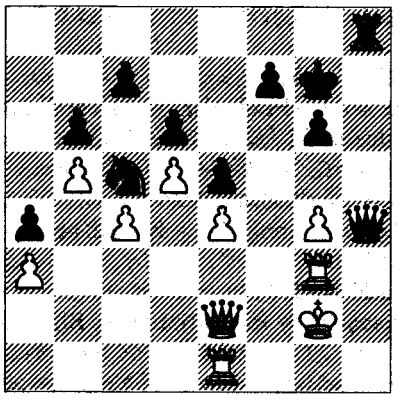
This little finesse gives White problems. Instead, the straightforward 31...♕xh4+? 32 ♕h2 ♕g5 33 ♖h3 leaves White better.

32 ♔g2

Now 32 ♖h3 ♖xh4 33 ♕h2 fails to 33...♖xg4. 32 ♖h3 ♖xh4 33 ♖xh4 ♕xh4+ 34 ♔g2, on the other hand, fails to 34...♘d3 35 ♖f1 ♘f4+ 36 ♖xf4 exf4 37 ♕f3 ♕f6.

32...♕xh4 *(D)*

W

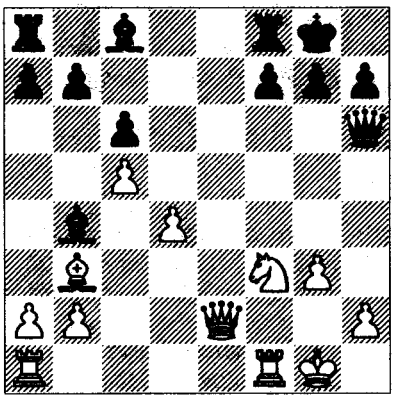


33 g5

White lacks good moves, while Black dominates the open file and has at his disposal a knight manoeuvre that will increase the coordination of the attacking force to the maximum.

33...♘b3 34 ♖g1? ♘d2! 35 ♔f2 ♘xe4+ 0-1

B



Fischer – Minić
Vinkovci 1968

19...♗h3?

Black was very optimistic when he played this move, obviously planning to take over the initiative. White's calm reply showed that Black had missed something important.

20 ♘e5!

We realize at once that the sudden pressure on the f7-pawn is worth more than an exchange.

20...♗xf1

It is too late to reconsider things and penitently return to e6. As Fischer demonstrated immediately after the game he had in mind 20...♗e6 21 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 22 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 23 ♖f1.

21 ♖xf1 ♗d2

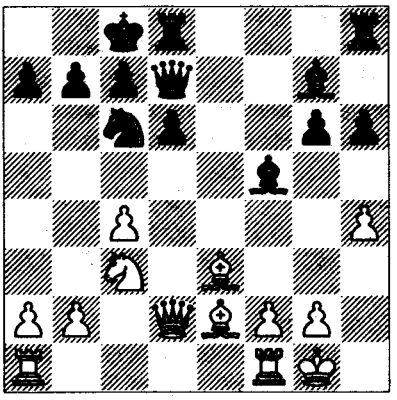
The word to Fischer again: 21...g6 is insufficient due to 22 ♘xf7 ♕g7 23 ♘d8+ ♔h8 24 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 25 ♕e5+ ♕g7 26 ♕e8+ with mate. 21...♖ae8 also fails to 22 ♘xf7. The only chance is to bring the wayward bishop into play.

22 ♖f3 ♖ad8?!

Depressed by the earlier error, Black stumbles again. 22...♔h8 23 ♘xf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♗xf7 ♗g5 is necessary, when 25 d5 keeps the advantage.

23 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 24 ♕e7 1-0

W



Kasparov – Speelman
Barcelona 1989

When Black erroneously castled queenside, his king was exposed to a sudden and vicious attack.

14 b4

This is just an introductory pawn sacrifice.

14...♘xb4 15 ♘b5

Given that no quiet moves can help him (15...c5 creates a backward d6-pawn vulnerable to 16 ♖ad1), Black is obliged to enter an unappealing mess.

15...♘c2

Grabbing the exchange at once by 15...♗xa1 is relatively easy to reject due to 16 ♕xb4 ♗e5 17 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 18 ♗f3, when 18...c5 19 ♕a3 ♕c7 20 g4 either secures the b1-square for the rook or wins material.

16 ♗f3!

White rises the stakes by offering the whole rook, but it's a poisoned gift again.

16...d5

16...♗xa1 17 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 has the drawback that it allows 18 ♖b1, when the attacking force reaches piercing strength; 16...♘xa1 takes care of the critical b1-square, but the defence succumbs to 17 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 18 ♕a5 c6 19 ♘b5, while 16...♘xe3 17 ♕xe3 ♗xa1 18 ♕xa7 hardly comes into consideration. Thus only bizarre efforts, such as the text-move, remain.

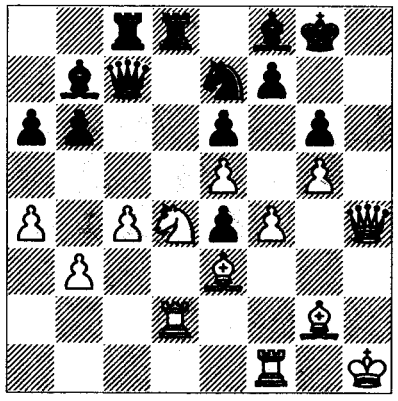
17 ♗xd5 ♘xa1

Finally Black has accepted the offer in a hopefully improved version, but four attacking pieces continue to hound the poorly protected king in the corner. What was its hide-out will become its casket.

18 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 19 ♕b4

Black has no reasonable defence.

B



Beliavsky – Kasparov
Barcelona 1989

Looking at the diagram, the first thing one could expect from Garry Kasparov is exactly what follows:

32...♖xd4! 33 ♗xd4 ♘f5 34 ♕h3 ♔g7

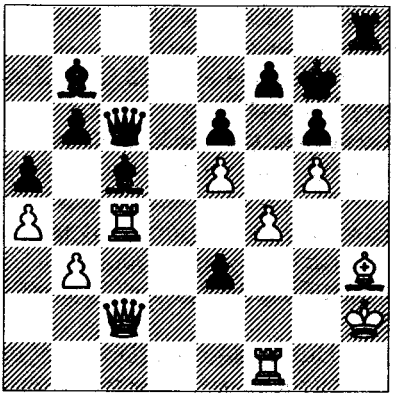
What a sudden change the exchange sacrifice brought about! The blocked position opens to White's detriment and his king comes under cross-fire on the h-file and the dark a7-g1 diagonal.

35 ♕c3 a5 36 c5

There are too many weak spots to think about and only desperate measures still hold on.

36...♘xd4 37 ♖xd4 ♗xc5 38 ♖c4 ♖h8+ 39 ♗h3 e3+ 40 ♔h2 ♕c6 41 ♕c2 *(D)*

B



41...♗a6

It's time to convert the material advantage into a technical win.

42 ♔g3 ♗xc4 43 ♕xc4 ♕d7 44 ♗g4 ♕d2 45 ♗e2

Or 45 ♕e2 ♕c3 46 ♕c4 e2+.

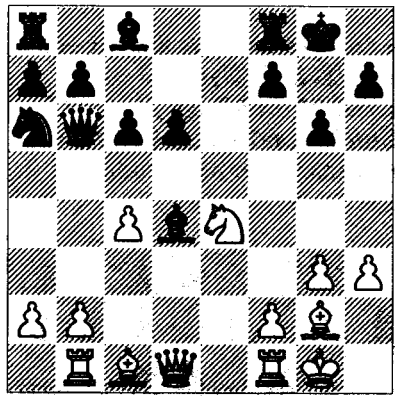
45...♖d8 46 ♖c1 ♖d4 47 ♕c2 ♕b4 48 ♕c3

48 ♖f1 ♖d2 49 ♕c4 ♕a3 cannot hold for long either.

48...♖xf4 49 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 50 ♗c4 ♗e7

Another pawn is lost because 51 ♔f4 would lose to 51...b5 52 axb5 a4, etc.

W



Grabarczyk – Bologan
Panormo ECC 2001

13 b4

I recall that in Reshevsky-Lombardy, USA Ch 1958/9 a very similar position was reached. There Black's knight was on d7, so he played 13...♘e5 and succumbed to a vehement attack. Here Black is better developed, but does it make a real difference?

13...♗f5 14 c5!

In Reshevsky's footsteps, although this time the e4-knight is pinned.

14...dxc5 15 bxc5 ♗xf2+

Taking the exchange at once by 15...♕xb1 keeps the f6-square under surveillance for a moment, but 16 ♕xd4 forces Black into 16...♗xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♕b4, when 18 ♕f6 decides. The question is whether Black could refuse the offer by 15...♕d8. Unfortunately, 16 ♘d6! forces him into unfavourable simplifications:

a) 16...♗xc5 17 ♘xf5 gxf5 18 ♖xb7 is not very appealing for Black in spite of the temporary pawn surplus.

b) 16...♗xb1 17 ♕xd4 ♗xa2 (or 17...f6 18 ♕c4+ ♔g7 19 ♗e3) 18 ♗h6 f6, when instead of 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♖e1 as given by Grabarczyk, 19 ♕a4 wins material.

16 ♖xf2 ♕xb1 17 ♘f6+ ♔h8

17...♔g7 leaves the king even more vulnerable; for instance, 18 g4 ♖ad8 19 ♕e1 ♗c2 20 ♔h2 ♘xc5 21 ♕e5, etc.

18 ♕d2! ♖g8

18...♕a1 fails to 19 ♖xf5, while 18...♖ad8 19 ♕h6 g5 is refuted by 20 ♔h2, when 21 ♗b2 cannot be parried.

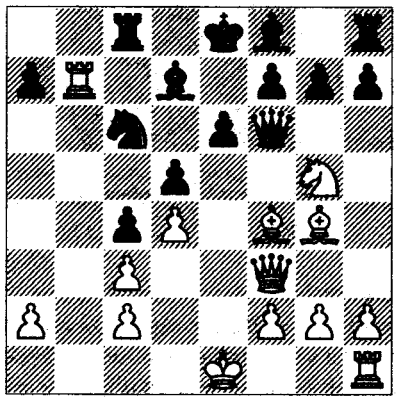
19 ♔h2 ♖g7 20 ♕h6 g5 21 ♗b2 ♘xc5 22 ♗e5

The final precision; 22 ♘h5? would lose to 22...♕xb2 23 ♖xb2 ♖g6.

22...♘e6 23 ♘h5 ♖ag8 24 ♘xg7 ♘xg7 25 ♖d2 ♕b6 26 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 27 ♕f6

The resistance has been crushed.

W



Baklan – Miroshnichenko
Alushta 1999

Some tactical motifs strike the eye as soon as we glance at the position, but 15 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 16 ♕xd5+ apparently fails due to 16...♔e7 (16...♔e8? loses to 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♗xe6).

Unfortunately for Black there is an additional motif supporting the exchange sacrifice which obviously hangs in the air:

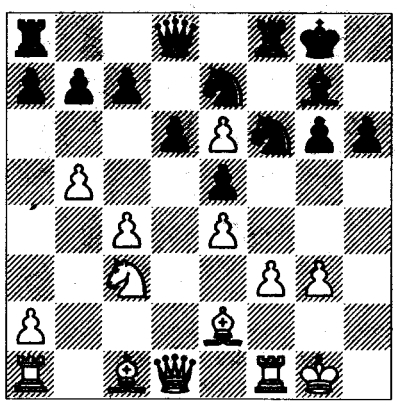
15 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 16 ♘xf7!

Now 16...♕xf7 loses to 17 ♕xd5+ ♔e8 18 ♗xe6, when the e-file is cleared for the final stab.

16...h5 17 ♗h3 ♕xf7 18 ♕xd5+ ♔e7 19 ♗g5+ ♔e8 20 ♗xe6 ♕c7 21 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 22 0-0 ♗e7 23 ♖e1 ♕d7 24 ♕b5 a6 25 ♕xc4 ♔d8 26 d5 ♗xg5 27 dxc6 ♕d2 28 c7+

After 28...♔c8 29 ♖b1 ♔d7 30 c8♕+ or 28...♔d7 29 ♕f7+ ♔c6 30 c8♕+ White is winning by force.

B



Van Wely – Degraeve
Mondariz Balneario 2000

16...♕c8

When he played this move, Black must have taken into account White's obvious reply:

17 ♘d5

Black now loses an exchange, but he gains counterplay.

17...♕xe6 18 ♘xc7 ♕h3 19 ♖f2 ♘xe4!?

A courageous, confusing move offering a whole piece.

20 ♖h2

After 20 fxe4 ♖xf2 21 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 22 ♔e1 ♕xg3+ 23 ♔d2 the wayward knight cannot be caught, but 23...♖f2 causes difficulties to the clumsily posted white pieces.

20...♕d7 21 ♘xa8 ♘xg3 22 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 23 ♖xh6 ♔g7 24 ♖h2 ♘ef5

When opting for 20 ♖h2, White was preferring security, but that has remained out of reach: his king has remained vulnerable, and his pieces lack coordination. His next move does not do much in that direction.

25 ♔f2?! ♖xa8 26 ♗d3 ♕c7 27 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 28 ♕d3?

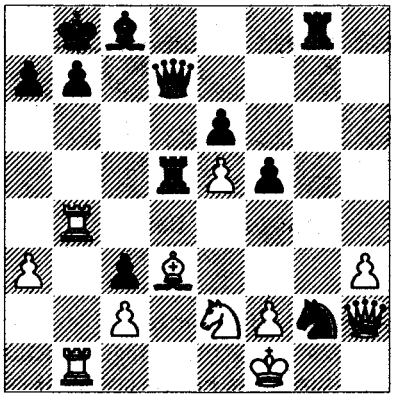
Exposed to checks on the dark a7-g1 diagonal, the white king needed urgent protection. 28 ♕d5 was indispensable, although 28...♖c8 (on 28...♕b6+ there is 29 c5 ♕xb5? 30 ♖h7+)

29 ♖ah1 ♕xc4 is nevertheless pleasant for Black.

28...♖c8 29 f4 ♕c5+ 30 ♔f3 e4+ 31 ♕xe4 ♕a3+

White is losing material.

B



J. Polgar – Khalifman
Wijk aan Zee 2000

White's position had been deteriorating for quite a while when Black decided he could go straight for the king's throat.

31...♖xd3! 32 cxd3 ♕xd3

The sad position of the white king worsens after the passed pawn appears on c2.

33 ♖c1 c2 34 ♖d4 ♕f3 35 ♘f4

Four pieces defend the king, but no meaningful coordination can be established against the devastating threat of 35...b6. Thus 35 ♘g3 b6 36 ♕xg2 loses to 36...♕xa3, and 35 ♘g1 to 35...♕xa3 36 ♘e2 b6 37 ♖xc2 ♗a6 38 ♖cd2 f4.

35...b6! 36 ♘xg2 ♗a6+ 37 ♔g1 ♗b7 0-1

The pins are unpleasant indeed!

In the following position, a little lapse in concentration had resulted in the erroneous move 26...♖cd8, when the difficulties struck at once:

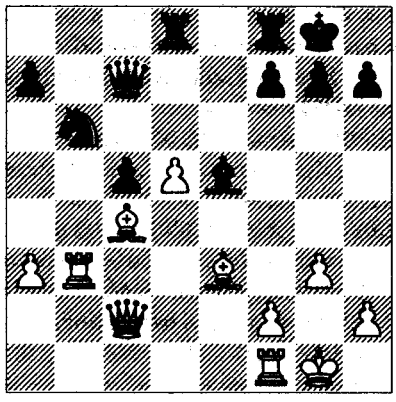
27 ♗d3!

Simple but strong. The d5-pawn is left *en prise*, but the h7-pawn and the c5-pawn are in trouble.

27...c4 28 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 29 ♖xb6! axb6 30 ♕f5

When relying on 27...c4, Black overlooked that this sacrificial line would create direct

W



Beliavsky – Galkin
New Delhi (FIDE) 2000

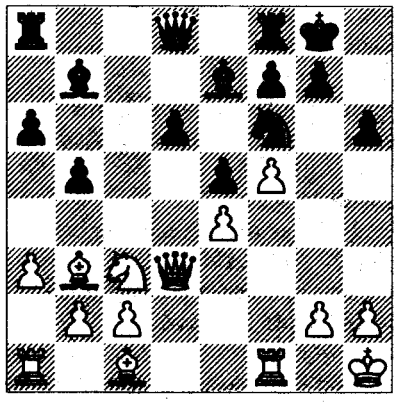
threats to the king. 31 ♕h5 can be averted by 30...g6, but then 31 ♕h3 ♕d7 32 g4 decides. Limited to bizarre defence, Black will succumb soon...

30...g5 31 ♕h3 ♔g7 32 ♗xg5 ♖d6 33 ♗e4 ♖h8 34 ♕f5 ♖d7 35 ♖e1 c3 36 ♗c2

Black has no good answer.

Common and effective, exchange sacrifices are especially dangerous when they affect the state of the centre. Typical among them are exchange sacrifices at c3 in numerous lines of the Sicilian.

W



Gipslis – Simagin
Sverdlovsk 1957

Instead of playing 15 ♗d2 followed by 16 ♖ae1 in order to strengthen the vulnerable point e4, White continued more 'actively' and was

struck by a counterblow which, as the Croatian saying has it, even sparrows know of...

15 ♗e3 ♖c8 16 ♖ad1 ♖xc3! 17 bxc3 ♗xe4 18 ♕e2 ♕c8 19 c4

White did not panic; he recaptured on c3 correctly with the pawn, which at least gives him some counterplay.

19...bxc4 20 ♗xc4 ♗b7 21 ♗b3 d5

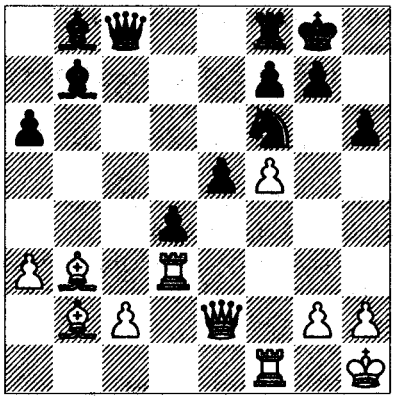
The immediate fruit of the sacrifice is the powerful advancing pawn-centre. Note that it cannot be broken by 22 c4 because of 22...d4 23 ♗xd4 exd4 24 ♕xe7 ♖e8 25 ♕d6 ♖e2 26 ♖g1 ♘e4.

22 ♗c1 ♗d6 23 ♗b2 ♗b8

The e5-pawn is safe, and at some point Black can expect to line up his queen and bishop on the b8-h2 diagonal.

24 ♖d3 d4 *(D)*

W



25 ♖g3

Undermining the central pawns by 25 c3 does not work due to 25...e4 26 ♖xd4 ♕c7 27 g3 e3+ 28 ♔g1 ♕c6.

25...♖d8 26 ♗c1

To and fro, but there is nothing better.

26...e4 27 ♗f4 ♗xf4 28 ♖xf4 ♗d5

Necessary in order to prevent 29 ♖fg4.

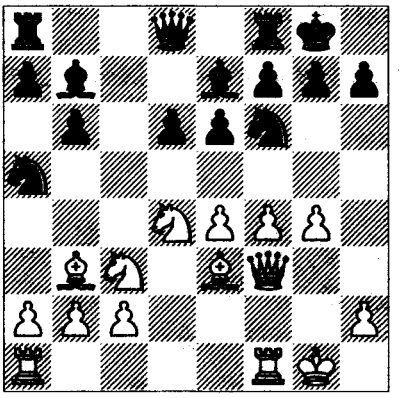
29 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 30 ♖xe4

Giving back material is White's best chance. Note that 30 ♖fg4 loses to 30...d3 31 ♖xg7+ ♔f8.

30...♘xe4 31 ♕xe4 ♕xf5 32 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 33 ♔g1 ♖c5 34 ♖d3 ♖c4 35 ♔f1 f5

By centralizing his king, Black creates good winning chances in a simplified endgame. His preponderance in the centre was rewarded in the ending.

B



Padevsky – Botvinnik
Moscow 1956

When White, relying on his stable centre and spatial advantage, started kingside action by 12 g4, his prospects looked bright. However, Black was ready and undertook radical measures to curb the attack...

12...♖c8 13 g5

Padevsky must have seen that his pawn-centre was suddenly exposed to strong pressure, but it was too late to change the course of events, because the prophylactic 13 ♘de2 would be met by 13...♘xe4! 14 ♘xe4 d5, regaining the material with advantage.

13...♖xc3! 14 bxc3?!

The exchange will cost White an additional pawn, but it was better to give up the g-pawn than the e4-pawn, not to speak of the damage to the pawn-formation. 14 gxf6 ♖xe3 15 ♕xe3 ♗xf6 would be less painful, but Padevsky still believed in his attack.

14...♘xe4 15 ♕g4 ♕c8

From this active post, the queen both defends and threatens at the same time.

16 ♖f3

After 16 f5 e5 the f5-pawn would be pinned, while the c3-pawn comes under attack. Note also that ♘xe6 is out of the question.

16...♘xb3 17 axb3 f5!

Given that 18 gxf6 ♖xf6 would rather expose the white than the black king, active counterplay is the best option.

18 ♕h4

18 ♕h5 would provoke 18...g6, but with the queen on h4, the pressure on the h-file can be parried by ...h6, because the g5-pawn is pinned.

18...e5

Consistent with the previous move.

19 ♖h3

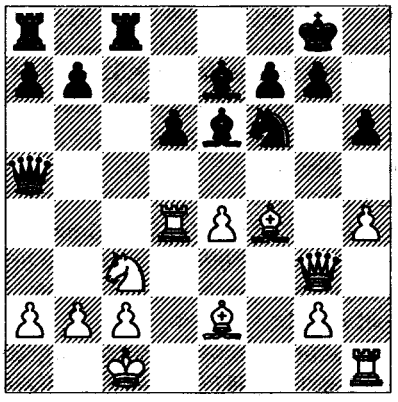
19 ♘e2 would fail to 19...♘xg5.

19...h6 20 ♕h5 ♕xc3 21 ♖d1 exd4 22 ♗d2

Or 22 ♗xd4 ♕xc2, again with mating threats. The pawn assault has mortally weakened the king.

22...♕c6 23 gxh6 ♘g5 24 ♖g3 ♕h1+ 25 ♔f2 ♘e4+ 0-1

B



Vasiukov – Boleslavsky
Kharkov 1956

By putting his rook on d4 and his queen on g3, Vasiukov intended to discourage the tactical blow at c3, but Boleslavsky did not assess these measures as adequate.

16...♖xc3! 17 ♕xc3 ♕xa2 18 ♕a3

There is nothing better. 18 b3 ♖c8 19 ♕b2 ♕xb3 is not very appealing either. The basic change which affected the position concerns the centre, where White's control has lessened on the critical d5-square.

18...♕xa3 19 bxa3 d5

That's it!

20 exd5 ♗xa3+ 21 ♔d2?

Despite appearances, the king would be less exposed on b1. Besides, the d2-square is needed for the dark-squared bishop.

21...♘xd5 22 ♗f3

22 ♗g3 ♗b4+ (or 22...♗c5) is pleasant for Black, as is 22 ♖b1 ♘xf4 23 ♖xf4 ♖d8+.

22...♘xf4 23 ♖xf4 ♖d8+ 24 ♔e2 b5

With pawn-majorities on both wings, Black starts a slow, inevitable advance.

25 ♖a1 ♗c5 26 ♖a5 ♗d4 27 ♗c6 ♗c4+ 28 ♔f3 ♗b6 29 ♖xb5

Simplifying the position through exchanges and seeking an opposite-coloured bishop endgame looks like the best drawing chance for White.

29...♗xb5 30 ♗xb5 ♖d2!

Playing sheepishly might have spoilt Black's chances. Boleslavsky sees far ahead.

31 ♗c4 ♖f2+ 32 ♔g3 ♖xf4 33 ♔xf4 h5!!

This subtle move creates the preconditions for two passed pawns widely separated on different wings, which is a standard winning procedure in opposite-coloured bishop endings.

Note that if White had been able to play h5, he would have held the draw.

34 g4

In case of 34 g3 Black would continue ...g6, move the king to h6 and carry out ...f6 and ...g5. There is no way to resist the advance, given that the bishop is tied by the a-pawn, while the c2-pawn is just a mute.

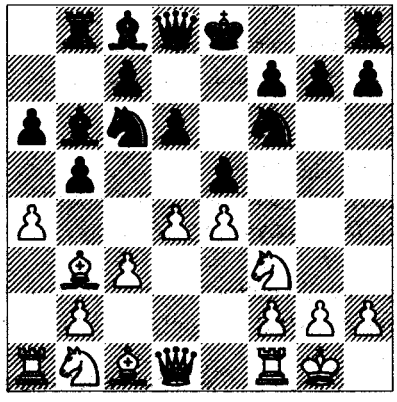
34...hxg4 35 h5 a5 36 ♗b3 ♔f8 37 ♔xg4 ♔e7 38 ♔f5 ♗d4 39 ♔e4 ♗c3 40 ♔f5 f6 41 ♔e4

If 41 ♔g6, then 41...♔d6, when the g7-pawn is obviously taboo.

41...♔d6 42 ♔d3 ♗e5

Now both paths available to White – 43 ♔c4 f5 and 43 ♔e4 ♔c5 – lead to defeat.

W



Dolmatov – Sivokho
St Petersburg 2000

It was this early that Dolmatov conceived a surprising exchange sacrifice in an apparently

peaceful opening scene, in which Black has some pressure on White's pawn-centre.

10 a5!? ♘xa5 11 ♖xa5 ♗xa5 12 dxe5

Eliminating the queen's knight has created an imbalance of power in the centre that favours White. The position is opened at a moment when Black's king is still in the centre and his pieces lack coordination.

12...♘g4

Black has numerous options, but none that are attractive. 12...dxe5 would lose to 13 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 14 ♘xe5, threatening ♘xf7+ as well as ♘c6+; 12...♘xe4 13 ♖e1 is just as dubious for Black, while 12...♘d7 13 ♗g5 obliges Black to open the position perilously.

13 ♗g5 f6?

Opening the position under these circumstances is an open invitation to a powerful attack. 13...♕d7 is essential, when White planned 14 e6 fxe6 15 ♘d4 e5 16 ♗e6, winning the queen but at a price. After 16...♕xe6 17 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 White should continue 18 h3 h6 19 ♗c1 ♘f6 20 ♗e3, still with a pleasant game.

14 exf6 gxf6

Forced due to 14...♘xf6 15 e5.

15 ♗h4 c5

The idea was to prevent 16 ♘d4, but the continuing lack of coordination and the feeble king offer White other ways to keep the initiative.

16 h3 h5

A clever solution when the knight could not retreat due to 17 ♘e5.

17 ♘bd2 ♖b7?!

The idea of transferring the rook into an attack on the kingside is over-ambitious. Black overlooked a tactical blow that will hit him hard.

18 ♗d5 ♖g7 19 e5!

Vacating the e4-square for the knight forebodes difficult days for Black.

19...♘xe5

Black should prefer 19...dxe5 20 ♘e4, since after the exchange of knights, White's game plays itself.

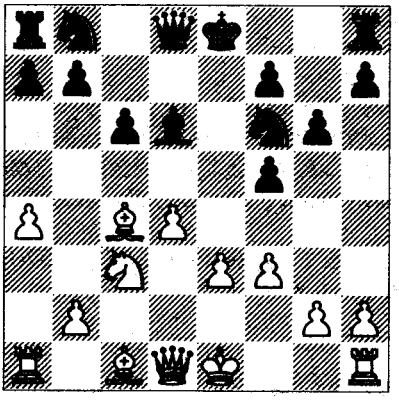
20 ♘xe5 dxe5 21 ♘e4 ♖h6 22 ♕f3 ♖gg6 23 ♖d1 ♔f8

Or 23...♕e7 24 ♘d6+.

24 ♗e6

White's attack is prevailing. The pressure exerted in the centre as a result of the exchange sacrifice has achieved its goal.

B



Tregubov – Van der Sterren
Amsterdam 2000

White intends e4.

10...♕c7

Black hopes that the increased pressure on h2 would prevent White's idea. However, Tregubov continued undeterred...

11 e4! ♗xh2

Opening the f-file would hardly help Black.

12 e5 ♗g3+ 13 ♔f1 ♘h5 14 ♖xh5! gxh5 15 f4

In a few moves the position has fundamentally changed in a way that strongly accentuates Black's disadvantages. Against White's powerful pawn-centre, there stands Black's broken pawn-structure and pieces strewn around without coordination. The lasting damage done to the kingside pawn-structure would not prove such a shortcoming if Black had time to castle queenside, but the sad situation of the wayward bishop requires that an additional tempo is spent to protect it.

15...h4

15...♘d7 16 ♕xh5 0-0-0 fails to 17 ♘e2 ♖hg8 18 ♖a3, when the bishop is trapped.

16 ♕h5 ♘a6 17 ♕xf5

With the f5-pawn eliminated, the black king is stranded in the centre and the triumphant entrance of the c3-knight is in the wings.

17...♖d8 18 ♗e3 ♘b4 19 ♘e4 ♘d5

Handicapped by an utter lack of coordination, Black has done what he could, but the blockade cannot hold.

20 ♗xd5 cxd5 21 ♖c1 ♕xc1+

21...♕b6 22 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 23 exd6 transforms White's attack into a winning passed pawn.

22 ♗xc1 dxe4 23 e6 ♖f8 24 ♗d2 1-0

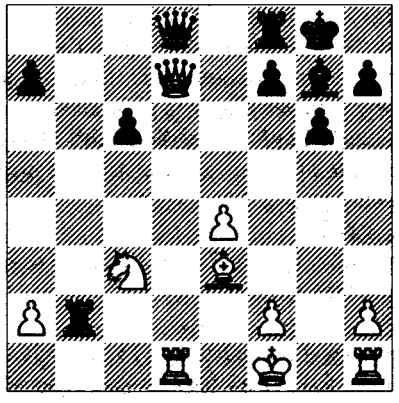
24...♖d6 25 e7 or 24...♖xd4 25 ♕b5+ is hopeless.

Once again the exchange sacrifice yielded a huge superiority in the centre, which was converted into a winning attack. Central dominance is an effective fruit of such positional sacrifices in a very large number of practical cases.

As we have seen, exchange sacrifices typically work by a gradual accumulation of counterplay. Together with pawn sacrifices, exchange sacrifices were one of the two most common ways to seize the initiative and launch an attack in all the periods of the 20th century. It is easy to explain its popularity with the practical player. In real value the sacrifice is small, in most cases limited to ♖ for ♘ (or ♗) plus ♙; the risk involved is proportionately small. Thus the compensation in the form of space or time can easily outweigh the offered material.

In comparison, a minor-piece sacrifice is a major investment, involving a major risk. Although less common than pawn sacrifices and exchange sacrifices, it is still a frequent and potent means of attack and counter-attack. In an overwhelming number of cases it seeks justification in the precarious position of the opponent's king.

B



Shamkovich – Simagin
Leningrad (Chigorin mem) 1951

White felt self-assured upon reaching this middlegame position. Expecting 19...♕xd7 20 ♖xd7 ♗xc3 21 ♖xa7, he offered a draw. The refusal was striking indeed:

19...♕f6!!

At first sight there are apparently several ways of refuting the piece sacrifice. However, when we start analysing attentively, they fall one by one:

a) 20 ♘e2 ♕f3 21 ♘g3 looks the simplest, but 21...♗h6! 22 ♗xa7 (22 ♗c5 ♖c2 23 ♕d3 just gives White a difficult endgame) 22...♖a8! dissuades us quickly – 23 ♖e1 (even worse is 23 ♗c5 ♗f8 24 ♗e3 ♖axa2) loses to 23...♖xa2 24 ♗c5 ♗d2 25 ♖b1 ♖a1 26 ♕b7 ♗c3!.

b) 20 ♖d3 does not satisfy because it leaves the back rank unprotected: 20...♕f3 21 ♖g1 (worse is 21 ♔g1 ♗xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖bb8! 23 ♖c1 ♖fd8, etc.) 21...♗xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖fb8 23 ♕xc6 (or 23 ♕g4 ♖xf2+) 23...♖d8 24 ♖c1 ♕e2+ 25 ♔g2 ♕xe3.

c) The obvious 20 ♗d4 does not stand scrutiny any longer: 20...♕f3 21 ♖g1 comes across the subtle little point 21...c5!. Then 22 ♗xc5 (or 22 ♖g3 ♕h1+ 23 ♖g1 ♕xh2 24 ♖g2 ♕h1+ 25 ♖g1 ♕h4) 22...♕xc3 23 ♗xf8 ♕c2! (with the point 24 ♖g2 ♖b1) is not exactly as promising for White as it looked at the beginning.

Shocked by the stunning blow, Shamkovich did not put up resistance:

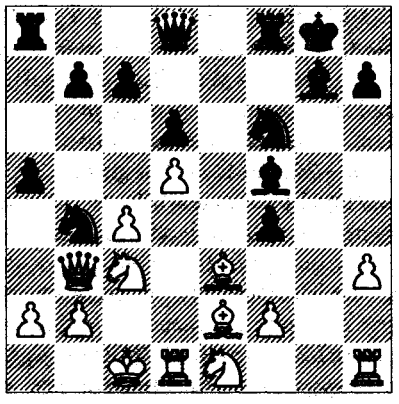
20 ♘a4?! ♖xa2 21 ♘c5 ♕f3 22 ♔g1

Or 22 ♖g1 ♕e2+ 23 ♔g2 ♕xe3.

22...♗h6! 0-1

There was no defence any more.

W



Moiseev – Simagin
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951

White had made some dubious decisions in the early stage of the game, but his next two

moves appeared to promise some relief from Black's pressure.

17 ♗d4 ♔h8 18 a3

However, the struggle now took an unexpected sharp turn:

18...c5!

Black is offering a whole piece. In return he gets the open a-file and the strong bishop-pair targeting the king's position.

19 ♗xf6?!

Taking the knight at the cost of exchanging the dark-squared bishop is obviously risky and the course of the game suggests White should refuse the poisoned gift and instead continue 19 dxc6.

19...♕xf6 20 axb4 axb4 21 ♘b5

The a4-square is not available, and 21 ♘a2 just invites 21...♖a7. So there remains 21 ♘b1 to examine; Ufimtsev demonstrated the line 21...f3 22 ♗d3 b5! 23 ♘c2 (23 ♗xf5 loses to 23...bxc4 24 ♕c2 b3) 23...bxc4 24 ♗xc4 ♗h6+ 25 ♘e3 ♖a1 26 ♔d2 (if 26 ♗d3, then 26...c4) 26...♕d4+ 27 ♗d3 ♖a2. The text-move deprives Black of ...b5, but the knight will be out of play.

21...♖a1+ 22 ♔d2 f3!

The dark-squared bishop is unopposed and all he needs is another open diagonal.

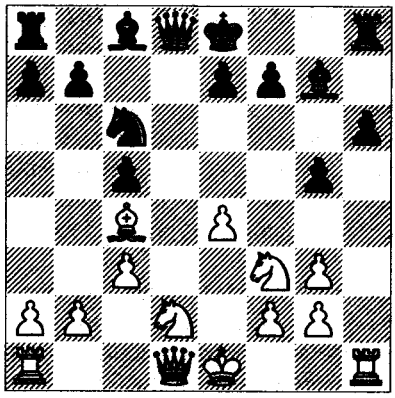
23 ♘c2

Resignation, but other options explain it fully: 23 ♖xa1 leads to a crushing defeat after 23...♗h6+ 24 ♔d1 fxe2+ 25 ♔xe2 ♗g6 26 f3 ♖e8+ 27 ♔f1 ♕e5 28 ♕d1 ♕g3 29 ♘g2 ♖f8 30 ♘e1 ♗e3 31 ♕e2 ♗d3. No better is 23 ♗d3 due to 23...♗h6+ 24 ♔c2 ♖xd1 25 ♔xd1 ♕g5 26 ♕c2 ♖a8, when the open file pays back the sacrificed material. A funny variation is 23 ♘xf3 ♗h6+ 24 ♔e1 ♗c1! threatening 25...♖b1 (demonstrated by Simagin). In all these variations being a knight up is of little consolation. Against the uncoordinated white pieces strewn around, the harmoniously placed black attacking force develops a tremendous initiative.

23...♗xc2 24 ♔xc2 fxe2 25 ♖xa1 ♕g6+

The king is caught in the cross-fire, given that 26 ♕d3 is not available due to 26...e1♘+, etc. White could have spared himself the following humiliation, but if there is anything a chess master does not lack, it is hope.

26 ♔d2 ♗h6+ 27 ♕e3 ♖xf2 28 ♖he1 ♗xe3+ 29 ♔xe3 ♕g3+ 30 ♔d2 ♕f4+ 0-1



Trifunović – Marović
Yugoslav Ch (Zagreb) 1961

I remember vividly the moment when we reached this position. A fleeting thought passed through my mind: can he sacrifice on g5? The reassuring answer was as quick: Trifunović would never do it! Such was the impeccable image of the 'king of draws' in those days. He himself was very proud of it. I recall a game he played somewhat later against Larsen as White. Very early he offered a draw, but Larsen turned a deaf ear. Somewhat later, having achieved what was practically a winning advantage, Trifunović offered a draw again, which Larsen, pressed by hard facts, simply could not reject. When asked why he did not play for a win, he replied: "When I offer a draw, even Larsen must accept it!" Unfortunately, this time Trifunović threw away his caution and continued:

12 ♘xg5! hxg5 13 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 14 ♕h5

A couple of pawns and the delicate position of the king justify the sacrifice.

14...♗f6?!

Expecting 15 ♕xf7+ or 15 ♗xf7+, Black overlooks the worst...

15 f4!

Only now did I realize that 15...gxf4 16 0-0-0 e6 17 gxf4 ♗d7 18 e5 ♗g7 19 ♘e4 is hopeless.

15...e6 16 e5 ♗g7

16...♘xe5 17 fxe5 ♗xe5 18 0-0-0 is hardly better.

17 ♘e4 ♕e7 18 ♘xg5 ♗d7 19 ♖d1

Better than simply castling; we shall see later why.

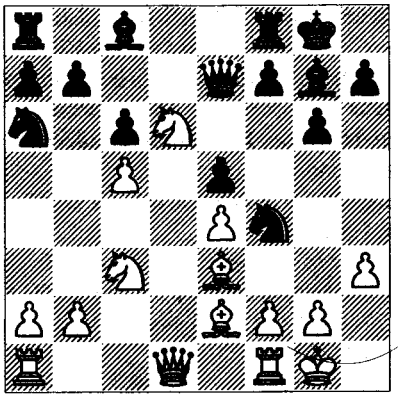
19...0-0-0 20 ♕xf7 ♕xf7?!

Better is 20...♖e8.

21 ♘xf7 ♖g8 22 ♘d6+ ♔c7 23 ♘xb7 ♘xe5

Desperate, but 23...♗f8 is insufficient due to 24 ♔f2.

24 fxe5 ♗xe5 25 ♘xc5 ♗xg3+ 26 ♔e2 ♗c6 27 ♘xe6+ ♔b6 28 ♗d5 1-0



A. Allen – Rogers
Gold Coast 2000

If White were to move, he could meet the positional necessities satisfactorily, but the manoeuvre ♘d2-c4-d6 took some time and it was Black who struck first:

14...♗xh3!

The tactical blow affirms that the king's position is not protected enough and calculations start.

15 ♗xf4?!

Opening the diagonal to the fianchettoed bishop can't be good in principle and what is not good in principle most often proves bad in specific circumstances. The straightforward 15 gxh3 ♕g5+ 16 ♗g4 h5 is not very appealing for obvious reasons, so the only other option is 15 ♗xa6 ♕g5 16 ♕f3 ♗g4 17 ♕g3 and this puts up stronger resistance, although the quiet 17...bxa6 safely keeps the better chances (18 f3 would fail to 18...♘h3+).

15...exf4 16 gxh3 ♘xc5 17 ♘c4 ♖ad8

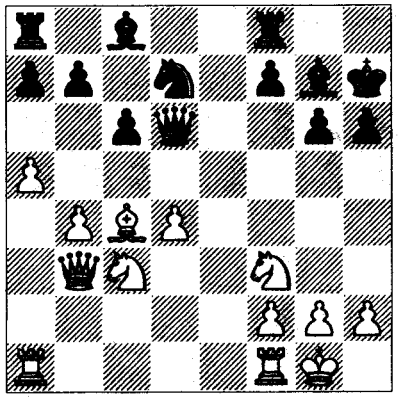
A nasty little *zwischenzug*: wherever the queen goes, some unpleasant answers wait in ambush.

18 ♕c2

Neither 18 ♕e1 ♕e6 19 ♘d2 ♕xh3 20 ♘f3 ♘d3 21 ♕b1 ♘e5 nor 18 ♕c1 ♕h4 19 ♖d1 (if 19 ♔g2, then 19...♘d3) 19...b5 would help.

18...♕g5+ 19 ♔h2 f3 20 ♗xf3 b5 21 ♘e2 bxc4 22 ♕xc4 ♖d2

Eliminating the e2-knight, after which White will have no good way to parry the mating threats.



Azmaiparashvili – Dreev
Neum ECC 2000

Finding himself in a cramped position, Dreev thought up a seemingly promising plan:

16...b5

Now 17 ♗xf7 (Black would not mind 17 axb6 ♘xb6) 17...♕f6 18 ♗e6 ♘c5 would alleviate his difficulties. However, there was something he had overlooked...

17 ♗xf7 ♕f6

17...♕e7 would provoke 18 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6 19 ♖ae1 ♕d8, when the delicate position of the black king coupled with his backward development bears heavily on the further struggle. Azmaiparashvili intended to continue 20 ♕c2+ ♔f7 21 d5! with a powerful initiative.

18 ♘e4! ♕f4 19 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6 20 ♕c2

The point of the sacrificial idea: the potential discovered check is coupled with another threat to the c6-pawn.

20...♘b8

20...♔f7 21 ♕xc6 limits Black to 21...♕b8 (if 21...♖b8, then 22 g3 catches the queen in a tight place), when 22 ♘eg5+ decides forcefully.

21 ♘d6+ ♗f5

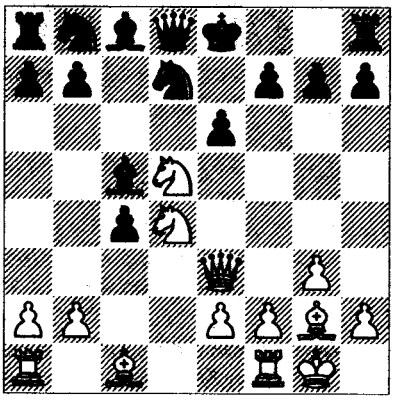
After 21...♔f6 22 ♘e5 the king is held hostage in the centre of the board.

22 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 23 ♖ae1

Thus Black kept his material surplus, but with the a8-rook and the b8-knight in their sorrowful position he is actually fighting a superior white force and must succumb soon. White threatens 24 ♖e4, forcing events.

23...♔f7 24 ♕b3+ ♖d5 25 ♘e5+ ♗xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♕xd4 27 ♕f3+ ♔g7 28 ♖e7+ ♔g6 29 ♕f7+ ♔g5 30 ♖e6 1-0

W



Lautier – Korchnoi
Biel 2001

Black has lost tempi, resulting in White having a significant lead in development. Black hoped to annul this by his last move, 11...♗b4-c5. However, there was a little surprise for him...

12 ♘xe6!

Of course, the point is not in the queen sacrifice which cannot be accepted (12...♗xe3 loses to 13 ♘dc7+ ♔e7 14 ♘xd8 ♗c5 15 ♘xb7, etc.), but in the initiative White will be able to seize and increase against Black's backward development.

12...fxe6 13 ♕xe6+ ♗e7

The apparently natural 13...♔f8 is met by the most unpleasant 14 ♗e3!. Lautier demonstrated 14...♘c6 15 ♕f5+ ♔e8 (15...♔g8 loses to 16 ♘e7+! ♘xe7 17 ♗d5+, etc.) 16 ♕f4. Unfortunately, keeping the king in the centre offers other developing options to White.

14 ♗f3 ♘f8?!

Again apparently sound and safe against the threatened ♗h5+. However, Lautier emphasizes that defensive moves of this kind just give a new impetus to an attack, and seeks a solution in the more energetic 14...♘f6, meeting 15 ♘xf6+ with 15...♔f8. Comparing with the text continuation – perhaps, but after 16 ♕xc4 ♗xf6 17 ♗f4 the shortcomings of the black position are there to stay; for instance, 17...♘c6 18 ♖ad1 ♕e8 19 ♗d6+ ♘e7 (19...♗e7 loses to 20 ♕f4+ ♕f7 21 ♗xe7+, etc.) 20 ♖d3.

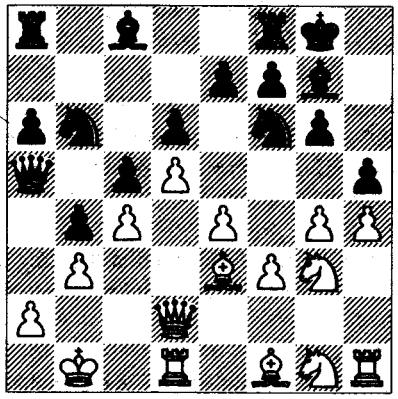
15 ♕e5 ♘e6 16 ♗h5+ ♔f8 17 ♗h6 ♔g8 18 ♗g4

White has introduced both his bishops into the attack by a series of direct threats, and so managed to freeze Black's queenside. The forcing line continues...

18...gxh6 19 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 20 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 21 ♖ac1 ♘c6

and instead of unnecessary elaborate checks White could finish it off by the prosaic 22 ♖xc4. After 22...♕d6 23 ♖f4+ ♔e8 White probably missed 24 ♖d1.

B



Moiseenko – Baklan
Kramatorsk 2001

White obtained a promising position, but instead of throwing himself into the attack by the natural 15 ♗h6, he concluded he had enough time to rule out any counterattack based on ...♘a4 and played 15 b3, which turned out to weaken his own king's position. The consequences were brutal and quick.

15...♗xg4! 16 fxg4 ♘xg4

Eliminating the growing pressure on the kingside, the bishop sacrifice accentuated the unopposed counter-pressure on the dark diagonal. Black threatens 17...♕a3 18 ♗g5 ♘a4 with various attacking options. The only thing we

can infer from that is that White should do something about it and do it at once (move the bishop to g5 or play 17 ♗h3). As if still unaware of the danger, Moiseenko believes he has time for developing moves...

17 ♗d3?! ♕a3 18 ♗g5 ♘a4 19 ♘1e2

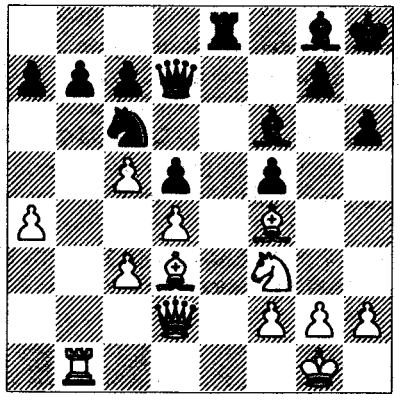
19 bxa4 b3 obviously opens the b-file with dramatic consequences.

19...♘f2 20 ♕c2 ♕b2+

Winning back the sacrificed material makes it all seem easy.

21 ♕xb2 ♘xb2

White has landed in a difficult position.



Leko – Grishchuk
Wijk aan Zee 2002

When White played 24 ♕e1-d2, challenging Black to choose 24...g5, the consequences did not look very convincing. However, Leko will demonstrate his fine points soon.

24...g5?! 25 ♖xb7!

The first point of the combination: Black cannot capture the bishop because 25...gxf4 26 ♕xf4 wins back a lot of material, essential being the c7-pawn.

25...♖c8 26 h4!

After the game Leko pointed out the hidden, quiet 26 ♗b5! gxf4 27 ♖xa7, but I like the text-move for its consistency.

26...gxf4 27 ♕xf4 ♗g7 28 ♕xf5 ♕d8?!

Exchanging queens would just increase the power of the better coordinated white pieces, but 28...♕e8, keeping the critical squares e6 and f7 under surveillance, is more logical.

29 ♘g5!

By catching the enemy pieces at a low level of coordination, White is able to launch the final attack.

29...hxg5

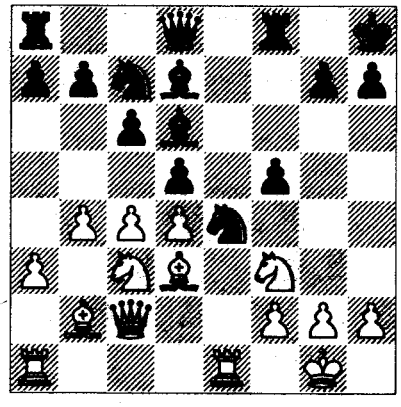
Note that 29...♕f8 does not work due to 30 ♘f7+.

30 hxg5 ♕f8 31 ♕h3+ ♗h6 32 ♗f5

Capturing the h6-pawn is sufficient and simpler.

32...♖e8 33 ♖xc7 ♖e1+ 34 ♔h2 ♘e7 35 g4 ♗e6 36 ♕xh6+ ♕xh6+ 37 gxh6 ♘xf5 38 gxf5 ♗xf5 39 ♖f7 ♗g6 40 ♖xa7 ♖c1 41 ♔g3 ♖xc3+ 42 ♔f4

The centralized white king helped the passed pawns win.



Grishchuk – Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee 2002

Threatened by the stifling 15 c5 ♗e7 16 ♘e5, it was in this early middlegame position that Gelfand conceived a far-reaching plan of counterattack. To start with, it entailed a pawn sacrifice:

14...♘e6! 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♘xd5 ♖c8 17 ♕d1

After 17 ♕b3 ♘6g5 the king's position is even more vulnerable.

17...♘6g5 18 ♘e5

Trying to close the diagonals towards the king. 18 ♘e3 is less radical, but it has other difficulties: 18...♘xf3+ 19 ♕xf3 ♕h4 20 g3 ♕h6 keeps the pressure; note that 21 ♗xe4 fxe4 22 ♕xe4? loses to 22...♖xf2 23 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 24 ♕g2 ♗xg3+ 25 ♔e2 ♖c2+.

18...♘h3+!

This damaging move was not in White's cards. His king becomes fully exposed.

19 gxh3 ♕g5+ 20 ♔f1

Gelfand excluded in his calculations 20 ♘g4 by 20...♘xf2.

20...♗xe5 21 dxe5 ♗c6

The pressure is transferred to the d-file and the long light diagonal with serious threats.

22 ♗c1

On 22 ♘e3 ♖cd8 Black threatens 23...♖xd3 24 ♕xd3 ♕f4, so White must react at once.

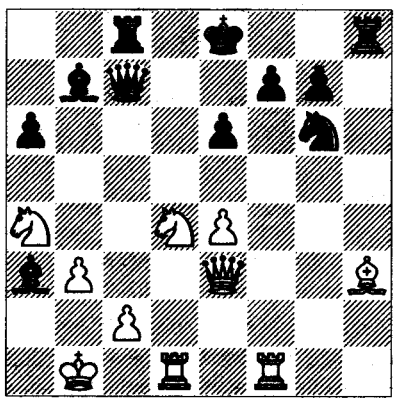
22...♕h4 23 ♗xe4 fxe4 24 ♗e3

24 ♘f4? is met by 24...♖xf4 25 ♗xf4 ♕xh3+ 26 ♔g1 e3! and the king is caught in the crossfire. It's time to forget the material advantage, give it back and enter peaceful waters.

24...♕xh3+ 25 ♔g1 ♗xd5 26 ♕xd5 ♕g4+

Repetition of moves marked the end of an interesting struggle, characterized by sudden metamorphoses of material and changes of fortunes.

W



Anand – Khalifman
Shenyang (FIDE WCup) 2000

Black is a pawn up and threatens 25...♕e5. In danger of being swept away by Black's potential counter-attack, Anand makes a virtue of necessity and combines some peculiar motifs to strike first:

25 ♗xe6! fxe6 26 ♘xe6

The first point lies in the fact that grabbing the c2-pawn threatens nothing, even though it falls with check. What's more, the greedy continuation 26...♕xc2+ 27 ♔a1 ♕xe4 ends in mate after 28 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 29 ♕g5#.

26...♕e7?

Anand points out rightly that 26...♕e5 was tougher, although one of the critical squares, d8, would not be as well protected as after the text-move. Then 27 ♕b6 ♗xe4 28 ♖d8+ ♔e7 leads to a hair-raising position. The tide seems to have turned in Black's favour, given that 29 ♘f8?!, originally awarded two exclamation marks by Anand, does not appear sufficient. White has ideas such as 29...♗xc2+?! 30 ♔a2 ♖xf8 (or 30...♘xf8 31 ♖xc8 ♘d7 32 ♕xa6 ♖xc8 33 ♕xc8) 31 ♖fxf8 ♘xf8 32 ♖xc8 ♗f5 33 ♖c7+ ♘d7 34 ♔xa3 a5 35 ♕c5+ ♕xc5+ 36 ♘xc5 ♔d6 37 ♖a7! ♘xc5 38 ♖xg7, but 29...♘xf8! 30 ♖xc8 ♘d7 31 ♕xa6 ♖xc8 32 ♕xc8 ♕b5! is good for Black, as Anand later indicated in his best games collection. He also gave 29 ♕a7+!, leading to a likely draw after 29...♖c7! 30 ♘xc7 ♔xd8 31 ♖d1+ ♗d6 32 ♘c5 ♗xc2+ 33 ♔a2; e.g., 33...♗xb3+ 34 ♔xb3 ♖h3+ 35 ♔a4 ♖h4+ 36 ♔b3!. Anyway, the timid text-move, in spite of appearances, makes the king more vulnerable.

27 ♕b6 ♘f8 28 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 29 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 30 ♕xc7 ♖d7 31 ♕b8+ ♔e7 *(D)*

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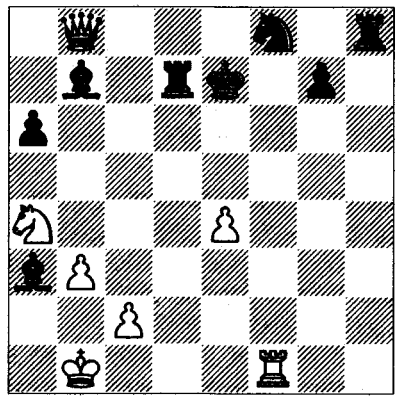


32 ♕e5+ ♘e6 33 ♖g1 ♔f7 34 ♘b6

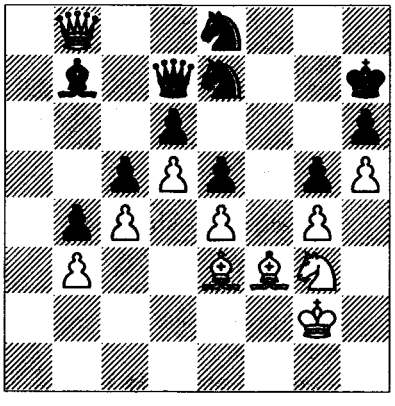
It's not enough to have an adequate amount of material, if the pieces are strewn around the board without coordination while the king remains exposed.

34...♖hd8 35 ♔a2 ♗f8 36 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 37 ♕f5+ ♔e7 38 ♖f1 ♗c8 39 ♕f7+ ♔d6 40 e5+ 1-0

We have now seen several minor-piece sacrifices generating a direct attack. They are often

at least in some elements kindred to pseudo-sacrifices. Another numerous group of cases are those sacrifices which result in a spatial advantage. They are commonly built on the passed central pawns which squeeze the opponent, and represent very substantial compensation.

W



Spassky – Penrose
Palma de Mallorca 1970

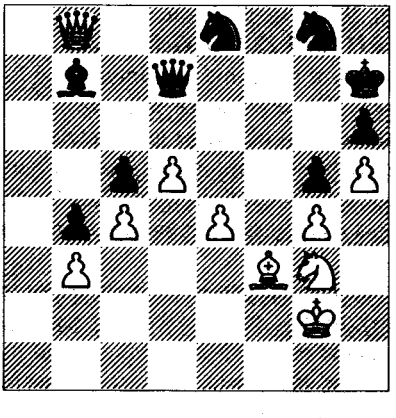
In a blocked position of this kind, a piece sacrifice is often the only way to make progress. Owing to the cramped state of the defender, the risk is small. I believe Spassky did not think twice when he offered a piece for two pawns.

37 ♗xc5! dxc5 38 ♕xe5 ♘g8

38...♕d6 39 ♕b2 ♕f4 is somewhat better than shifting pieces in the cramped area of the back ranks.

39 ♕b8 *(D)*

B



39...♘ef6

Directed against 40 e5, when a counter-sacrifice on d5 would be possible. 39...♘e7 could be played with the same idea but simultaneously placing the f5-square under surveillance. However, White has many waiting moves and can wait for the right opportunity to advance pawns or jump to f5.

40 ♘f5 ♘e7 41 ♘xh6!

Three pawns plus a huge spatial advantage make Black's further efforts utterly futile.

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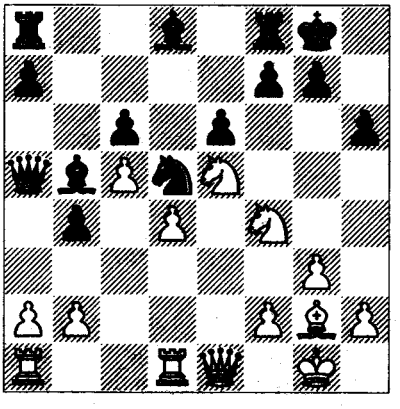


Khuzman – Ramesh
Biel open 2000

When he played 19...♘f6-d5, Black hoped to neutralize White's pressure, which is generated by his spatial advantage. Unfortunately, his assessment was wrong:

20 ♘xe6! fxe6 21 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 22 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 23 ♕xc6 ♘c7 24 ♕g6

Apart from the pawns won, the weak black king secures White a clear superiority.

24...♖f6 25 ♕g4 ♖b8 26 ♖e1

This accentuates not only the weakness of the back rank but also the general lack of coordination characterizing the black pieces.

26...♕b5 27 ♖ac1

The rooks have taken their best positions, and d5 is now possible.

27...b3 28 a3 ♖f8 29 d5

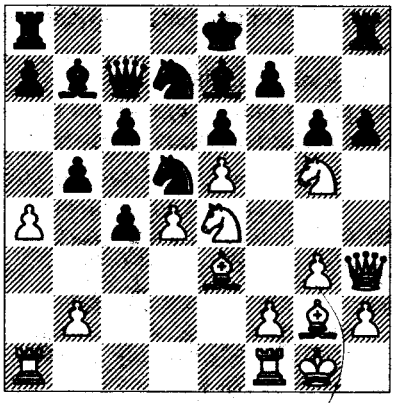
The sacrifice has been transformed into an enormous space advantage emphasizing the cramped state of the whole black force.

29...♗g5 30 ♖c4 ♕a5

If 30...♖be8, then 31 ♖d1.

31 ♖e2 ♘b5 32 h4 ♗f6 33 ♕g6 ♔g8 34 d6

Having enlarged his dominance in space, White can return to the side motif and create a mating attack. Black cannot parry the threats.



Ulybin – Bocharov
Russian Ch (Samara) 2000

Here again White starts an attack from a position of spatial advantage. The basic motif is to expose his opponent's king in the centre.

19 axb5 cxb5 20 ♘xe6! fxe6 21 ♘d6+!

It is this little finesse which gives the sacrificial idea its forcing character.

21...♗xd6 22 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 23 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♕xd5

For the moment it's only one pawn for the knight, but the shattered pawn-structure, the insecure king and an important tempo (the a8-rook is attacked) favour White.

24...0-0-0

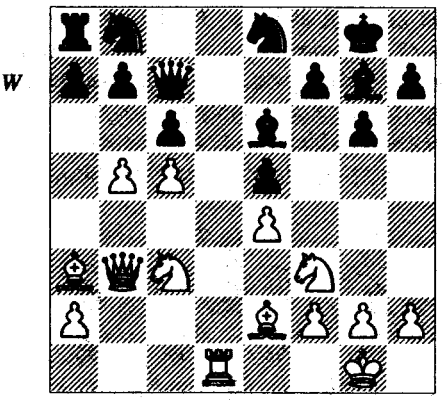
24...♖b8 25 ♕e4 ♖b6 manages to protect everything but at the cost of exposing the rook; then 26 d5 ♘c5 27 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 28 d6 ♕b7 29 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 (29...♕f7 loses to 30 d7+ ♔e7 31 d8♕+) 30 ♖ad1 is advantageous for White.

25 ♕a8+ ♕b8 26 ♕c6+ ♕c7 27 ♕a8+ ♕b8 28 ♕c6+ ♕c7 29 ♕xc7+ ♔xc7 30 ♖xa7+ ♔b8

On b8 the king is very vulnerable. 30...♔c6 31 e6 ♗d6 is better.

31 ♖fa1 ♖he8 32 e6 ♘b6 33 ♗f4+ ♗d6 34 e7 ♗xf4 35 exd8♕+ ♖xd8 36 gxf4 ♖xd4 37 ♖g7 ♘a4 38 ♖e1 ♖d8 39 ♖e5 1-0

In the following position Black, who suffers from lack of space and underdevelopment, has played 15...♗c8-e6 to neutralize the potential



Kobaliya – Zakharevich
Russian Ch (Samara) 2000

threat on the a2-g8 diagonal. The answer could not have pleased him:

16 ♘d5! cxd5 17 exd5 ♗f5 18 ♗c4

White has just a pawn for the piece, but the compensation is largely in the form of a spatial superiority and a mobile pawn array ready to advance.

18...♗g4

Unfortunately, the normal development by 18...♘d7 would be punished by 19 d6 ♘xc5 20 dxc7 ♘xb3 21 ♖d8 ♖c8 22 ♘g5.

19 h3 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♘d6

Facing the avalanche, Black did not find anything better. 20...a6 would be met by the clever 21 c6, when 21...♘d6 22 b6, 21...axb5 22 d6 and 21...bxc6 22 dxc6 axb5 23 ♖d7 all fail.

21 cxd6 ♕c8

Unfortunately, 21...♕xc4 does not work due to 22 ♖c1, but blocking the avalanche is not enough. White wins prosaically...

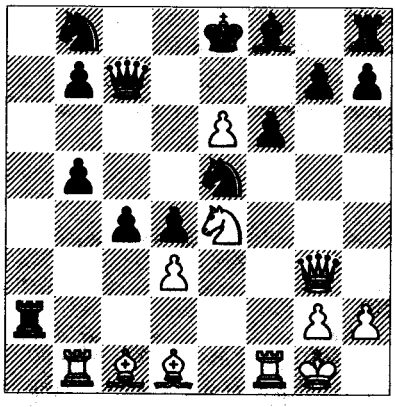
22 ♗f1 ♘d7 23 ♖c1 ♕e8 24 ♖c7

The rest of the game is uninteresting for our purposes. The dominance in space created by the mobile mass of pawns grew into a material advantage by standard means. For real and psychological reasons, fighting back in such conditions is usually an extremely difficult task.

As the series of games we have examined eloquently testify, the attacker's arsenal in the middlegame is enriched by knight and bishop sacrifices of all sorts and nuances. The amount of material sacrificed is still not large in comparison with the value and risk, hence the frequency

of these sacrifices. We could not say the same for rook and queen sacrifices. A sacrifice of a whole rook in an overwhelming number of cases is just a pseudo-sacrifice or a kindred case. A real rook sacrifice happens more rarely and it usually comes as a part of a cascade of sacrifices in a mating attack.

W



Spassky – Reshko
Leningrad 1959

This middlegame scene was reached after a very unusual Caro-Kann in which Black invested time and effort to win material on the queenside, but left his king in the centre and most of his pieces undeveloped. White's force, on the contrary, is coordinated and poised to strike. The following sacrifice hardly comes as a surprise, although the nuances are hidden. The choice is simple: attack or succumb.

19 ♖xf6!

A whole rook to open the position of the black king! The open f-file now broadens tactical possibilities.

19...gxf6

Ignoring the sacrifice by 19...♘bc6 fails to 20 ♖f7 ♕c8 21 ♕xg7! ♕xe6 22 ♘f6+ ♔d8 23 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 24 ♕xf8+ ♔c7 25 ♗f4, when the queenside pieces join the attack decisively.

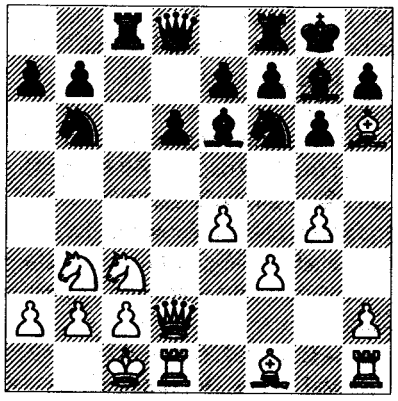
20 ♘xf6+ ♔d8 21 ♘d5 ♕d6 22 ♗g5+ ♔c8 23 ♗g4!

The key move of White's tactical idea. Now 23...♗g7 24 ♘e7+ ♔c7 25 ♘f5 ♕xe6 26 ♗h3 gives him a strong attack.

23...♘xg4? 24 e7 ♗xe7 25 ♕xg4+ ♘d7 26 ♘xe7+ ♔c7 27 ♗f4 ♘e5 28 ♕g7 ♔b6 29 ♗xe5 ♕e6 30 ♗xd4+ 1-0

Tremendous attacking power was unleashed by the rook sacrifice.

B



Panov – Simagin
Moscow Ch 1943

White has just played his bishop to h6, planning the elimination of Black's 'Dragon' bishop followed by a kingside pawn assault. Black's reply refused to comply...

12...♗h8!? 13 ♗xf8 ♕xf8

Not a rare decision in positions of this kind: by exchanging the rook for a dangerous white bishop and preserving his dark-squared bishop, Black will feel more secure on the kingside, while his fianchettoed bishop might play an important role in a queenside counterattack.

14 ♘d4

Keeping the c4-square under surveillance by 14 ♘a5 would be met by 14...♘fd7 (then 15 ♘xb7 is obviously answered with 15...♖xc3 16 bxc3 ♕c8), but 14 h4, striving to open the h-file, leaves a better impression.

14...♗c4 15 g5 ♘fd7 16 ♗h3 e6 17 ♔b1 ♘e5 18 f4?!

This whole plan chosen by Panov is quite unconvincing. This move is especially doubtful, as it allows strong tactical counterplay. 18 ♕f2 ♘c6 19 f4 is in order.

18...♘f3! 19 ♘xf3?!

Again a counter-sacrifice was in order: 19 ♕e3 ♘xd4 20 ♖xd4.

19...♗xc3 20 bxc3 d5!

The fianchettoed bishop has been waiting in ambush for a long time and eventually has seized its chance. From just an exchange, Black

has raised his stake in the counterattack to a whole rook, but the damaged white pawn-structure and the visible lack of coordination forebode serious difficulties for his opponent.

21 ♕c1 ♘a4 22 exd5

Finally White understands that only bold play gives him a chance.

22...♗xa2+

This will open the king further, given that 23 ♔xa2 loses to 23...♘xc3+ 24 ♔b3 ♕c5.

23 ♔a1 ♕c5 24 dxe6 ♘xc3

Black's threat is simple: when the a2-bishop retreats, the white king will be in a mating-net. White's next move does nothing against it.

25 ♖d4?

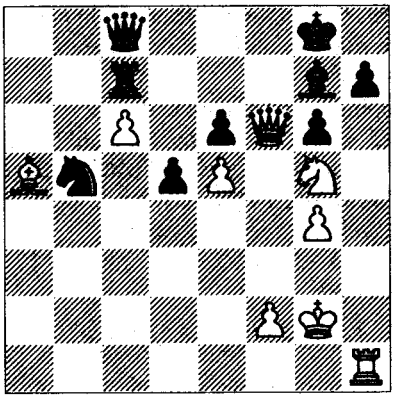
25 exf7+?! ♗xf7 26 ♗xc8 ♕a5+ 27 ♔b2 ♕b4+ 28 ♔a1 ♕a4+ 29 ♔b2 ♘e2+ is also bad for White, but 25 e7! ♕a5! is a draw.

25...♗xe6 26 ♗xe6 fxe6

White is defenceless.

As one might expect on the basis of its mobility and superior practical strength, it is rare for the queen to be offered as a real sacrifice (more often it is closer to a pseudo-sacrifice). When it occurs, the targets are worth it and the aims are high. The target is commonly the opponent's king, the aim an attack promising mate or immense compensation of various sorts.

W



Alikhanov – Fomichenko
Krasnodar 2001

The late middlegame was characterized by the advance of the passed pawn. It made possible the following queen sacrifice:

41 ♗xc7! ♗xf6 42 exf6

The appearance of the second passed pawn tips the scales.

42...e5

42...♘xc7 does not work due to 43 ♖xh7, 42...♕xc7 loses the queen to 43 f7+, while 42...h5 happens in the game a move later.

43 f3 h5 44 f7+ ♔f8

If 44...♔g7, then 45 ♗xe5+: 45...♔h6 46 ♘e6 or 45...♔f8 46 c7 – the *quietus*.

45 ♗a5 ♘d6 46 ♗b4 ♕b8

46...♕xc6 loses to 47 ♖c1.

47 ♗xd6+ ♕xd6 48 c7 ♕c6 49 ♖b1 ♕c2+ 50 ♔g3 1-0

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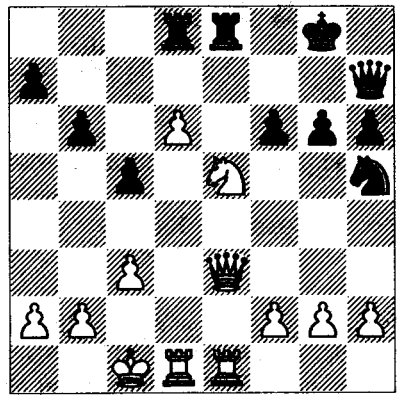


Rashkovsky – Dobrov
Oberwart 2000

In a little comedy of errors preceding the diagrammed position, Black's 21...♕c7-h7 appeared to force decisive material gains, but Rashkovsky had a trump-card...

22 ♘c6! ♖xe3 23 ♖xe3

It's again a passed pawn which spoils Black's pleasure of winning the queen.

23...♕d7

23...♖d7 24 ♖e8+ ♔f7 25 ♖de1 g5 26 ♖1e7+ ♔g6 27 ♖xh7 puts a high price on the d-pawn.

24 ♘xd8 ♕xd8 25 ♖e7

Obviously not 25 d7 ♘g7. White now threatens 26 ♖c7 followed by 27 d7.

25...♘g7 26 ♖xa7

Due to the unfavourable position of the black king, restricted to its back rank, and the passive queen acting as a blockader, some kind of slow death is inevitable.

26...h5 27 g3?!

27 d7 ♘e6 28 ♖d6 ♔f7 29 ♖c6 and ♖c8 wins immediately.

27...g5?! 28 h3? ♘e6 29 ♖e7 ♘d4

Getting rid of the passed pawn is the only chance to survive (if 29...♘f8, then 30 d7).

30 cxd4 ♕xd6 31 ♖a7 cxd4 32 ♖e1

One shortcoming has been transformed into another: the king remains in the mating-net.

32...♔f8

The white king can find a refuge against checks. For example, 32...♕c6+ 33 ♔d2 ♕b5 34 b3 ♕b4+ 35 ♔d1 ♕b5 36 ♖ee7 ♕d3+ (or 36...♕f1+ 37 ♔d2 ♕xf2+ 38 ♖e2) 37 ♔e1, when the king is running to g2.

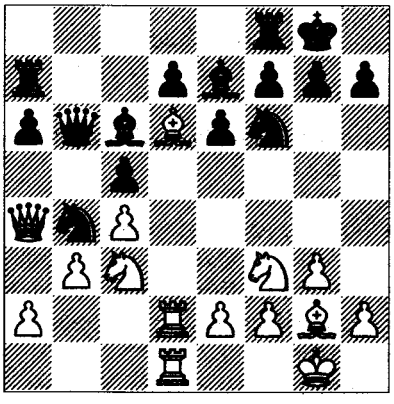
33 ♖ee7

When the pawn ending is lost, then the higher types of endgame are commonly lost as well.

33...♕c6+ 34 ♔d2 ♕f3 35 ♖ec7 ♕xf2+ 36 ♔d3 ♕xg3+

Having nearly reached the end, instead of the winning 37 ♔c4 b5+ 38 ♔xb5 ♕e5+ 39 ♔b4 White blundered with 37 ♔xd4? and had to concede a draw.

W



Skembris – Solozhenkin
Padova 2000

Having played 15...♗b7-c6, Black was hoping to free his game after 16 ♕a3 ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♕c7 18 ♖6d2 d5. However, he failed to notice that retreating the queen was not White's only option...

16 ♗xe7! ♗xa4 17 ♘xa4 ♕b8 18 ♗d6

Statistically two minor pieces do not make compensation for a queen, but in this concrete situation some more windfall will come by. The intermediary text-move makes sure that White gets what he wants under the best of circumstances; White takes care to make ♘e5 possible. Now 18...♕c8 19 ♗xc5 and 18...♕d8 19 ♘e5 explain the following response...

18...♖c7 19 ♘e5 a5

Or 19...♕a7 20 a3.

20 ♘xc5 ♕a7 21 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 22 ♘cxd7+ ♘xd7

Or 22...♔g8 23 a3 ♘a6 24 ♘c6.

23 ♘xd7+ ♔e7 24 c5

Taking count, we learn that apart from the material compensation, White also has a useful pawn-majority. Black could reduce it by 24...♘xa2 25 ♖xa2 ♖xd7, but after 26 ♖c1 the c-pawn cannot be tamed. Therefore, Black must go after the c5-pawn.

24...♘d5 25 c6

A nice little touch simplifying the play in the desired direction.

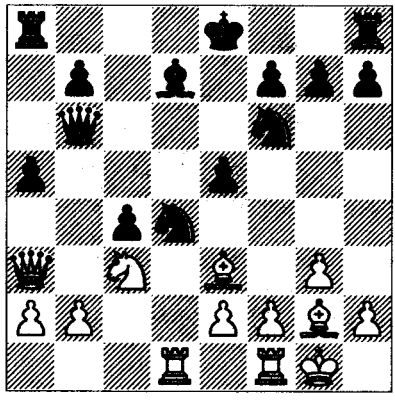
25...♖xc6 26 ♘e5 ♖c5 27 ♗xd5 exd5 28 ♘d3 ♖c6 29 ♘f4 g5?!

Instead of this move, which weakens the pawn-structure for good, 29...g6 is necessary.

30 ♘xd5+ ♔f8 31 ♘e3 ♖c5 32 g4

The punishment comes at once – the knight moves to f5 and the king is in trouble.

W



S. Spasov – Spodny
corr. 1998

White now chose an aggressive plan:

15 f4 ♕b4

This move, threatening 16...♘c2, seems an appropriate simplifying move. However, an intriguing idea now occurred to Spasov...

16 fxe5! ♘c2 17 exf6 ♕xa3

When offering his queen, White saw that he would have clear compensation after 17...♘xa3 18 fxg7 ♖g8 19 ♘d5 ♕xb2 20 ♘c7+ ♔d8 (or 20...♔e7 21 ♗g5+) 21 ♖xf7.

18 fxg7 ♖g8 19 ♗b6!

19 bxa3? is insufficient, but this hidden point challenges the defence anew.

19...♕xb2 20 ♘d5

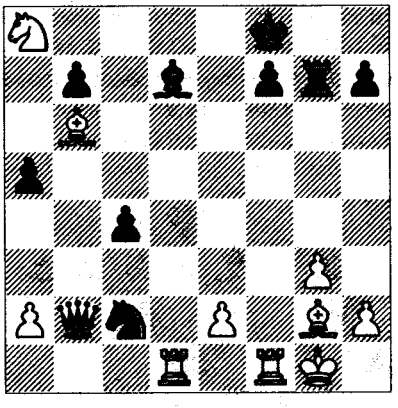
The king is suddenly endangered by checks from c7 and f6, which forces Black into undesired measures.

20...♖xg7

20...♖c8 21 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 22 ♖xf6 ♗c6 (or 22...♖xg7 23 ♗xb7) loses to 23 ♗xc6+ bxc6 24 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 25 ♖d8+ ♔e7 26 ♖xg8 ♖g6 27 ♗c5+ ♔f6 28 ♗f8. Giving more space to the king by 20...f5 allows an attack from the other side: 21 ♘c7+ ♔e7 22 ♗c5+ ♔f6 23 ♖xd7 ♖xg7 (or 23...♖ac8 24 ♘d5+) 24 ♖d6+ decides.

21 ♘c7+ ♔f8 22 ♘xa8 *(D)*

B



The relation of forces would still satisfy Black, if it were not for the continued doubtful position of his king and his uncoordinated pieces.

22...f5

22...♕b5 would not improve the situation due to 23 ♖d5 ♕a4 24 ♗c5+ ♔g8 25 ♘b6, while 22...♗e8 loses to 23 ♗c5+ ♔g8 24 ♖d8. 22...f6 is also no better. After 23 ♗c5+ ♔g8 24 ♘b6 ♕b5 25 ♖d5 ♘b4? 26 ♖xf6 the defence cracks.

23 ♗c5+ ♔g8 24 ♗d5+ ♔h8 25 ♘b6 h6

After 25...♕b5 26 ♗f2 the pressure does not lessen.

26 e4?!

26 ♗xc4 is a simpler solution.

26...♕b5?!

Black could put up stronger resistance by the natural 26...♗c6.

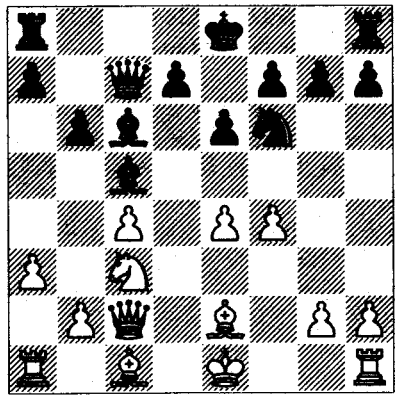
27 ♗f2 c3?!

27...♗c6 is still better.

28 ♗b3

Black is losing a piece and White's initiative is rewarded fully.

W



Goldin – Chuchelov
Cappelle la Grande 2001

The conflict started to boil when White decided to seize some space:

12 b4 ♗d4 13 e5

Obviously he expected to force a retreat because 13...♘e4 14 ♘xe4 is an appealing exchange sacrifice for White. However, he had to face unexpected and dangerous complications after Black's reply.

13...♘d5!

Black suddenly seizes the initiative backed up by a simple tactical point: 14 cxd5 would fail to 14...♗a4.

14 ♘e4

This looks like a clever solution to all White's problems, but it turns out that 14...♗xa1 15 cxd5 is not the only possibility for Black.

14...♘xf4

Confronted by the intended ♘d6+, Black finds an elegant solution.

15 ♘d6+

On 15 ♗xf4 Black had in mind 15...♗xe5, eliminating the check on d6. Then 16 ♗xe5

♕xe5 17 ♘c3 ♗xg2 18 ♖g1 ♗c6 gives Black enough material for the piece.

15...♕xd6!

After 15...♔e7 16 ♗xf4 ♗xa1 17 0-0 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 White would keep a significant spatial advantage and direct threats to the exposed king on e7.

16 exd6 ♘xg2+ 17 ♔d2

17 ♔f1 ♗xa1 18 ♖g1 ♘h4 is also pleasant for Black.

17...♗xa1 18 ♗b2 ♗xb2 19 ♕xb2 0-0 20 ♖g1 f6

At the end of the complications, Black has good material compensation for the queen, a secure king and the strong pawn-majority on the kingside.

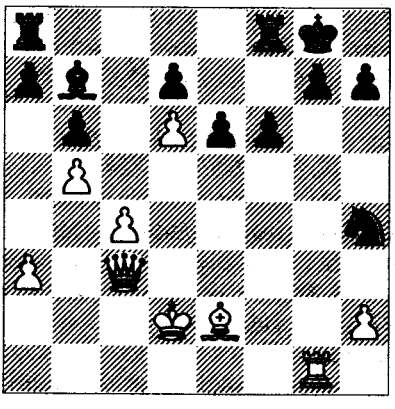
21 ♕c3

21 ♕d4 just provokes the advance of Black's pawn-centre: 21...e5 22 ♕g4 f5 with a clear advantage for Black.

21...♘h4

Better than 21...♘f4, when 22 ♕g3 ♘g6 23 h4 imposes a passive, clumsy defensive line.

22 b5 ♗b7 *(D)*



23 c5

Searching for counterplay, White makes use of the tactical motif which would present itself after 23...♖ac8 24 c6 dxc6 25 ♕c4 and creates a pawn-majority on the queenside.

23...bxc5 24 ♕xc5 ♘g6 25 ♕c7 ♗d5 26 ♖c1

The d7-pawn is obviously poisoned, but White's dominance on the open file combined with the pawn-majority apparently give him new hope.

26...♘e5 27 ♕a5

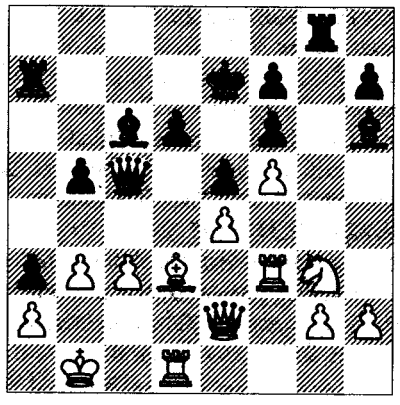
Advancing the queenside pawns looks slow, at least in comparison to the expected advance of the f-pawn. In such a situation, winning the a7-pawn is quite appealing, but too slow as well.

27...f5! 28 ♖c7 f4 29 ♕c3

Unfortunately, 29 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 30 ♕xa7 f3 31 ♗f1 f2 proves untenable. On 32 b6 Chuchelov gives 32...♘c4+! 33 ♔d3 (33 ♔e2 loses to 33...♘xb6 34 ♕xb6 ♗c4+) 33...♘xd6 34 ♕xd7 ♗c4+, etc.

29...♖f5 30 a4 f3 31 ♗f1 f2 32 ♔c1

By moving away from the potential ...♘f3+ and ...♘xh2, White solves but a part of his problem. The blockader on f1 is not firm and if that bishop is exchanged, the passed pawn will decide by itself. Instead of the elaborate and erroneous 32...♖g5?, which might have ruined a fine game, Chuchelov demonstrated the move 32...♗e4! intending 33...♗d3. On 33 ♖c5 there is 33...♘d3+ 34 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 35 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 36 ♕f3 ♖c8+ supporting the quick promotion at f1.



Benjamin – Kožul
Lucerne Wcht 1997

On the second board of the match Croatia-USA we had good reason to expect good news in the early middlegame. The position arose after White's 22nd move. The first impression was that Kožul could continue 22...♕xc3 23 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 24 ♖xc3 ♗xe2, but after protracted thought he gave up the idea. He concluded that 25 ♘xe2 ♖xg2 26 ♖c2! makes possible 27 ♘c3 and ♘d5+, when the b-pawn

moves forward, the king gets active via c2-b3, while the black passed h-pawn represents no danger whatever. In the evening I checked Kožul's variations and agreed with him, but something did not give me peace. In the morning, analysing the position with Kožul blindfold during breakfast, it dawned upon me that after 22...♕xc3 23 ♗xb5 there was a tactical stroke in the position: 23...♖xg3! 24 ♖xc3 (if 24 ♖xg3 then 24...♗xe4+ 25 ♗d3 ♖c7, mating) 24...♖xc3 25 ♗c4 (in case of 25 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 the subsequent 26...♖ac7 will paralyse White) 25...♗g5, when the e4-pawn falls with clear motifs against the imprisoned, weak white king. Fortunately, this was not the last time in the game that a queen sacrifice presented itself...

22...♗f4?! 23 ♘h5 ♗h6

Grabbing the pawn is neither consistent nor wise: 23...♗xh2 24 g3 is not worth looking at.

24 ♗c2 ♖c7 25 ♖h3 ♗g5 26 ♖hd3 ♖gc8

Kožul considered 26...d5 27 exd5 ♗xd5, given that 28 ♖xd5? loses to 28...♕xc3, but obsessed with some bigger chance he decided to wait.

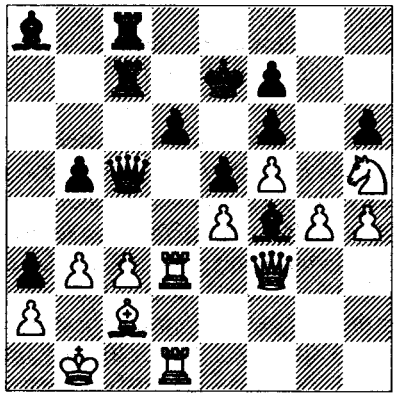
27 ♕e1 ♗a8 28 h4 ♗h6 29 g4 ♗f4

Threatened by 30 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 31 g5+, Black provokes 30 ♘xf4 exf4 judging correctly that the endgame arising after 31 ♖xd6 ♕xc3 is won for him. On 31 g5 he had in mind 31...♕e5, when 32 ♖xd6 fails again, this time to 32...♖xc3 33 gxf6+ ♔e8 34 ♕d2 ♖xb3+ with mate.

30 ♕e2 h6?! 31 ♕f3? *(D)*

The long manoeuvring took the sting out of Black's attacking prospects, but as it often happens the long passive defence blunted White's instincts. 31 ♖f1 is more natural.

B



31...♕xc3!

Black has been given a chance to do what he missed ten moves earlier.

32 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 33 ♕f1

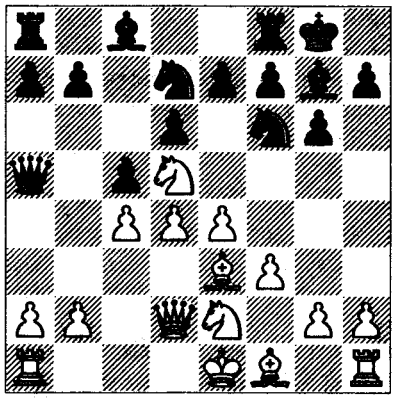
33 ♕f2 ♖xc2 34 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 35 ♔xc2 ♗xe4+ 36 ♔c3 is essential, although even in this case 36...♗e3 leaves White with few chances to save the game.

33...♖xc2 34 ♘xf4 ♖b2+ 35 ♔a1 ♖cc2 36 ♘d3

Otherwise mate in three.

36...♖xa2+ 37 ♔b1 ♗xe4 38 ♕g1 ♖cb2+ 0-1

B



Jo. Nielsen – Larsen
Copenhagen 1965

Tal's famous win over Bobotsov in the olympiad of Varna 1958 might have had something to do with Black's decision to sacrifice his queen in this position:

9...♘xd5!

In comparison with other possibilities at Black's disposal this proves a good, courageous decision, and as the continuation testifies rather tempting to his adversary.

10 ♕xa5 ♘xe3 11 ♕d2 cxd4

Black has just two minor pieces and a pawn for the queen, but the nasty knight in White's throat and superiority on the dark squares count too.

12 ♘f4

12 ♖c1 would provoke 12...e5 and close the long diagonal, but f4 would not be available any more.

12...♘b6

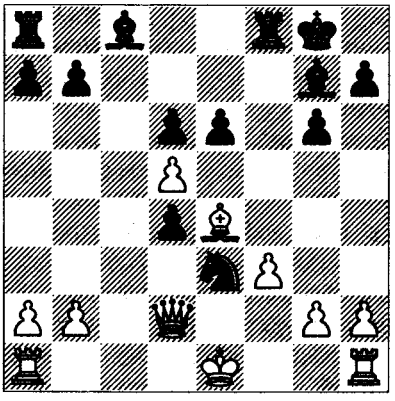
It's important to preserve the stronger knight on the board, which squeezes White and facilitates pawn counterplay.

13 ♘d5 ♘bxd5 14 cxd5

14 exd5 would avoid the blow that follows in the game, but would allow 14...e6, with the same idea: to open the position against the white king which is deprived of its castling rights.

14...f5 15 ♗d3 fxe4 16 ♗xe4 e6 *(D)*

W



17 ♖c1?

One of those 'active' moves which happen to play into the opponent's hands. The idea was nice: 17...exd5 18 ♖c7 dxe4 19 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 20 ♕xd4+ ♖f6 21 ♕xe3 exf3 22 0-0, but it contained a hole. To develop Black by grabbing pawns – 17 dxe6 ♗xe6 18 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 19 ♗a6 ♗c4 – does not seem clever. Larsen was of the opinion that White should play 17 ♔f2, when 17...exd5 18 ♗d3 offers him level chances. And indeed 17...♗h6, so brutal later in the game, is not so powerful here due to 18 ♕b4. Black should continue 17...♘g4+ 18 ♔f1 (18 ♔g3 loses to 18...♗e5+), when he can take a draw by repetition, or take a deep breath and look for more; though, in my opinion, 18...a5, limiting the queen's mobility and preventing the coordination on the first rank, does not risk much.

17...exd5 18 ♖c7 ♗h6!

A crushing reply.

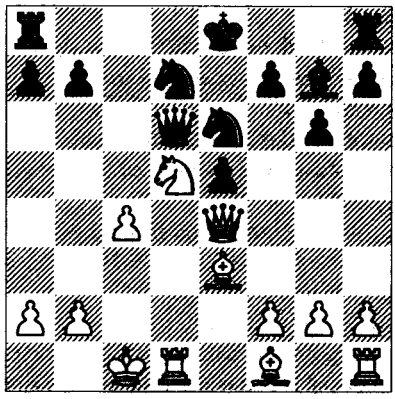
19 g4

White resorts to desperate measures. On 19 ♗d3, 19...♖e8 threatens to win the queen but there is no place to hide it.

19...dxe4 20 ♕xd4 ♖xf3 21 ♕xe4 ♗xg4

White is lost.

B



Pachman – Petrosian
Portorož IZ 1958

Pachman was enjoying his position. Threatening 15 ♘b6 while the opponent's king was still in the centre apparently gave him good reason. However, not for long...

14...0-0! 15 ♘b6 ♕xd1+ 16 ♔xd1 axb6

In return for the queen Black has quite good material compensation, but as we shall see he has better development and attacking possibilities against the feebly protected white king.

17 a3

Grabbing a pawn by 17 ♕xb7 would not solve the problem. The simple 17...♖fd8 speeds up the counterplay.

17...♘dc5 18 ♕c2 e4

The opening of the long dark diagonal for the fianchettoed bishop is a bad omen for White. The d4-square will be of better use to the e6-knight, while the b2-pawn is a potential target. The king's refuge has become sorely vulnerable. Black threatens 19...♘a4.

19 f3 ♖ad8+

It is seemingly more natural to open the position by 19...exf3 20 gxf3, when 20...♘a4 is still strong, but Black's priority is to prevent the king's intended flight to f2 and keep it under full pressure on the open central files.

20 ♔e1

After 20 ♔c1 ♘d4 21 ♗xd4 ♗h6+ 22 ♔b1 ♖xd4 the king is even more exposed to the doubling of rooks on the d-file.

20...♘d4 21 ♗xd4 ♗xd4

Denying White's king the hide-away at f2. There is very little he can do about the threat of 22...exf3 followed by 23...♖fe8+.

22 fxe4

If he keeps the e-file closed by 22 f4, then 22...♘d3+ is most unpleasant.

22...♘xe4?

Having outplayed his opponent, Black becomes careless, which could cost him dearly.

23 ♗e2?

The queen counter-sacrifice by 23 ♕xe4 ♖fe8 24 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8+ 25 ♔d1 ♗xb2 26 a4 resurrects White's chances.

23...♖fe8 24 ♖f1 ♖e7!

Black regains his balance and concludes correctly that the e-file is the route of the final attack, because it cannot be opposed.

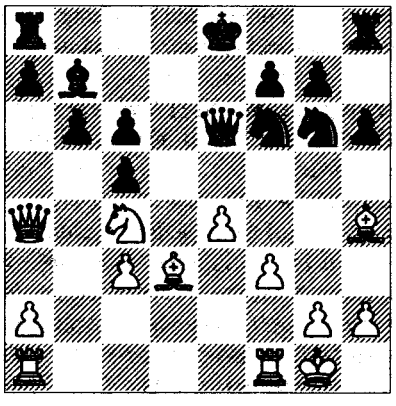
25 ♖f3 ♖de8 26 ♖d3

26 ♔f1 does not work due to 26...♘g5.

26...♗g1 27 h3 ♗h2 28 ♗f3 ♗g3+ 29 ♔d1 ♘f2+ 30 ♔d2 ♗f4+ 31 ♔c3 ♘xd3 32 ♔xd3 ♖e3+ 33 ♔d4 ♗h6 34 c5 b5 35 ♗xb7

35 c6 ♗g7+ 36 ♔c5 bxc6 would last somewhat longer.

35...♗g7+ 36 ♔d5 ♖8e6 0-1



Tal – Hecht
Varna OL 1962

When this position arose on the board, it seemed that, threatened by 18...b5 as well as 18...♘xh4, White would have to continue 18 ♗xf6. What is more, it looks a good solution because 18...♕xf6 19 e5 and 18...gxf6 19 ♘e3 are pleasant for White. However, 18 ♗xf6 could be met by 18...b5, which did not appeal much to Tal. Unexpectedly he drew out of his hat...

18 e5

This leaves the h4-bishop *en prise* and challenges Black to venture 18...b5. It was clear at the time that we were in for one of those hurricanes which Tal's brilliant mind concocted with such ease and inimitable quickness.

18...b5

Hecht did not like 18...♘xh4 due to 19 ♘d6+ ♔f8 20 ♖ae1 and placed his hopes on the courageous b-pawn advance.

After the text-move, 19 ♘d6+ would not work any more because of 19...♕xd6, and so Black's prospects look bright. However, the very next move challenged all his expectations.

19 exf6!!

Tal's sacrifices, hidden, sudden and piercing, had a tremendous psychological impact on his opponents. It's as if you walk down the street at noon and somebody comes up and slaps you in the face. It's not easy to come to your senses and react calmly and sensibly. Especially when the sacrifice, as in our case, is based on concrete realistic facts.

19...bxa4

19...0-0! is the critical defence. Then Tal planned 20 ♖ae1! ♕xe1 21 ♖xe1 bxa4 22 ♗xg6 fxg6 23 ♖e7, but 23...g5 (Lilienthal; not 23...♖f7? 24 ♘d6) appears to hold: 24 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25 ♗g3 ♗a6 26 ♗e5! ♗xc4 27 f7 h5 28 g4! hxg4 29 fxg4 ♖ad8 30 h4 and a draw is likely, despite Black's extra rook.

20 fxg7 ♖g8 21 ♗f5!

The number of hanging pieces grows, but none of them can be captured. It's the exposed position of the black king which is critical for further events.

21...♘xh4

21...♕xc4 22 ♖fe1+ ♕e6 loses material after 23 ♖xe6+ fxe6 24 ♗xg6+ ♔d7 25 ♖d1+ ♔c7 (not, of course, 25...♔c8? 26 ♖d8+) 26 ♗g3+ ♔b6 27 ♖b1+. Better, but inadequate, is 21...♕xf5 22 ♘d6+ ♔d7 23 ♘xf5 ♘xh4 24 ♘xh4 ♖xg7 25 ♘f5 leading into an advantageous endgame for White.

22 ♗xe6 ♗a6

If 22...fxe6, then 23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♘xb7 ♖xg7 25 ♖f2 simplifies into an endgame in which White's sound pawn-structure offers better chances.

23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♗c4

A nice little detail: with the exchange of bishops at c4 White would keep better coordinated

pieces and a superior pawn-structure in the coming endgame.

24...♖xg7 25 g3 ♔xd6 26 ♗xa6 ♘f5?!

The tempest has passed, and the violent attack has been transformed into an advantageous ending. Note that against the broken black pawn-formation, which looks like witch's teeth, stands the healthy white pawn-structure consisting of fewer pawn-islands and much better posted: two white pawns on the queenside control four enemy pawns, which gives an obvious advantage to the kingside pawn-majority. Note also that in such circumstances the white bishop is superior to the black knight, while the black rooks lack coordination. Besides, the king in the centre does not look happy. The alternative is 26...♖b8, although 27 ♖ad1+ ♔c7 28 ♖d2 is better for White.

27 ♖ab1 f6 28 ♖fd1+ ♔e7 29 ♖e1+

29 ♖b7+ ♔e8 30 ♖xg7 is natural and gives White a clear advantage, but Tal was hoping to squeeze more out of his active pieces.

29...♔d6 30 ♔f2 c4

At the cost of a superfluous pawn the king can find a good refuge at c5.

31 g4 ♘e7 32 ♖b7 ♖ag8 33 ♗xc4 ♘d5 34 ♗xd5 cxd5 35 ♖b4 ♖c8?

Simplifying into this rook endgame was the best Hecht could do, but here he misses a chance to reduce material further by 35...h5.

36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 37 ♖a6+ ♔c5 38 ♖xf6 h5

The reduction of material comes too late and in worsened circumstances. White's connected passed pawns now decide.

39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♖h7 41 g5 ♖h5 42 ♖f5 ♖c2+ 43 ♔g3 ♔c4 44 ♖ee5 d4 45 g6 ♖h1 46 ♖c5+ ♔d3 47 ♖xc2 ♔xc2 48 ♔f4 ♖g1 49 ♖g5 1-0

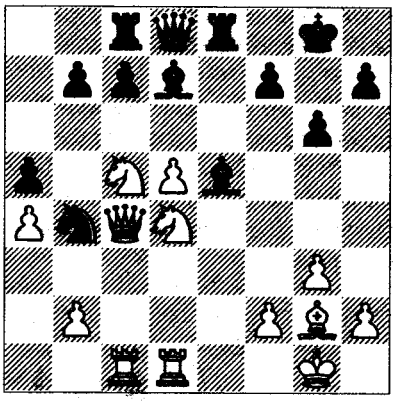
Many a time a queen sacrifice is not a part of some deeper plan, but a desperate defensive attempt. Caught in an extreme predicament, the defender resorts to extreme measures. The queen sacrifice is certainly one of them.

In the following position Anand, although having an unenviable position due to an opening error, did not give up hope. He fought back by entering a hidden sacrificial line...

20...b6 21 ♘c6 ♗xc6 22 dxc6 bxc5!

One could hardly bear to contemplate playing 22...♕e7 23 ♖d7, but 22...♕f6 23 ♘d7 ♕e6 24 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 25 ♗h3 ♖cd8 26 ♖d7 is painful too.

B



Gelfand – Anand
Shenyang FIDE WCup 2000

23 ♖xd8 ♖cxd8 24 ♖e1

A good quiet move. The greedy 24 ♕xc5 would be answered by 24...♘d3.

24...♗d4 25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26 ♕b5 ♔g7

26...♖e1+ is too slow: 27 ♗f1 ♖e6 (27...♖b1 is even slower: 28 ♕xa5 ♖xb2 29 ♕xc7) 28 ♕xa5 ♖f6 (otherwise 29 ♔g2 will nullify the pressure on f2) 29 ♕xc7 ♖xf2 30 ♕d8+ ♔g7 31 c7, etc.

The text-move speeds up Black's counterplay in the event of White taking on a5.

27 ♕xa5

This was a propitious moment, when White could prevent the counterplay by another quiet, good move: 27 ♔f1, delaying the capture. Black would have to resort to a sequence of 'only' moves to retain chances of saving a draw: 27...♖e5! 28 f4 ♖e3 29 ♕xa5 ♘c2 30 ♕d2 (30 ♗d5? fails to the surprising 30...♖e7!) 30...♖e1+ 31 ♕xe1 ♘xe1 32 ♔xe1 ♗xb2 33 ♔d2 c4.

Now, however, Black invades the second rank and immediately gains a share of the initiative.

27...♖e2 28 ♕xc7 ♖xf2 29 ♔h1

Gelfand demonstrated an interesting defence in case of 29 h4, when 29...♘d3 30 ♕d8 ♖d2+ 31 ♔h2 ♖d1 prevents 32 c7? due to 32...♗g1+ followed by mate.

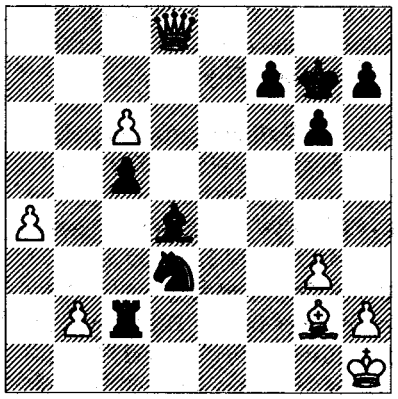
29...♘d3 30 ♕d8?!

Again an impatient move, which misses a subtle point. 30 ♗d5 is correct, giving vital air

to the king and targeting the f7-pawn (thus 30...♘e1? loses at once to 31 ♕xf7+, etc.).

30...♖c2! *(D)*

Why is this so essential? Because the rook must control the passed c-pawn. In the sequence 30...♖xb2 31 c7 ♘f2+ 32 ♔g1 ♘g4+ there is 33 ♕xd4+, when the passed pawn reaches promotion. The text-move threatens 31...♘f2+ and excludes the possibility.



31 ♗f1

31 ♗f3 temporarily exposes the back ranks, and fails to protect the king due to 31...♖c1+ 32 ♔g2 ♖c2+ 33 ♔h3 (bur not 33 ♗e2? ♖xe2+ 34 ♔f3 ♖e3+ 35 ♔g4? ♘f2+ 36 ♔f4 f5) 33...♘f2+ 34 ♔h4 ♘d3!, when White is compelled to repeat the position because 35 h3? loses to 35...♖c4!.

31...♘f2+ 32 ♔g2 ♘g4+ 33 ♔f3

On 33 ♗e2 there is 33...♘e5, when after 34 c7 ♖xe2+, 35 ♔f1 ♖f2+ leads to perpetual check, while 35 ♔h3? meets a machine-like refutation: 33...♘f3 36 c8♕ ♘g1+ 37 ♔h4 ♖e4+ 38 ♕g4 (if 38 g4, then 38...♗f2+ mates) 38...♖xg4+ 39 ♔xg4 ♗e5!! 40 a5 h5+ 41 ♔h4 ♗f6+ 42 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 43 a6 ♘f3+ 44 ♔h3 ♘g5+ and the knight catches the fugitive.

33...♘e5+ 34 ♔e4 ♘xc6 35 ♕c7 ♘b4

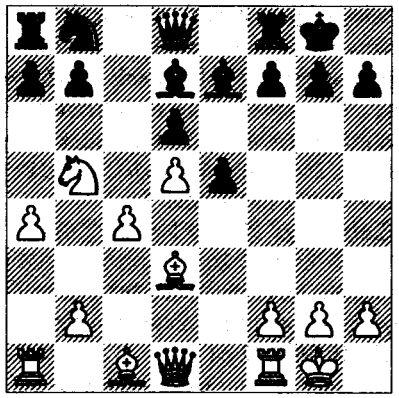
The game is to keep the king in the net.

36 g4 ♖f2 37 ♗b5 g5 38 a5 ½-½

The sacrifice finished beneficially, but not without uncertainties and pain.

In the mass of modern chess competitions we still come across bold, imaginative and beautiful queen sacrifices. This is despite all the far-reaching opening preparation and the innate caution and restraint of professional chess-players. A sign of hope?

At the end of our discussion on the chess sacrifice I would like to turn the reader's attention to a type of sacrifice which is by its deeply hidden motive or complexity kindred to the real sacrifice, but by its nature is a pseudo-sacrifice by the very fact that it cannot be accepted without fatal consequences.



Anand – Topalov
Monaco (Amber blindfold) 2003

12...f5

This ambitious move does not conceal the fact that Black has not finished his development. White discovers a subtle way to emphasize it:

13 c5!

This fine pawn sacrifice has two points. It is clear that 13...dxc5 14 d6 costs Black an exchange, so he is forced into the game continuation, where we see White's other idea.

13...♗xb5! 14 axb5! e4

The second point of White's idea is shown by 14...dxc5 15 d6! ♗xd6 16 ♗c4+ ♔h8 17 ♕d5 ♕c7 18 ♖d1 ♗e7 19 ♕e6 ♗f6 20 b6.

15 c6!

Another subtle point: 15...bxc6 16 dxc6 exd3 17 ♕xd3 keeps the black queenside without prospects. Counter-sacrifices at c6 or d7 lead into inferior simplifications, while 17...d5 18 ♖d1 is not very promising for Black.

15...♘d7 16 ♗e2 ♘e5 17 f4

Having obtained a spatial advantage, accentuated by his queenside pawn-majority, White

is attentive to potential counterplay. Very simple and good.

17...exf3 18 gxf3 ♗f6 19 ♔h1 b6 20 ♖a2

The protected passed pawn, deep in black territory, guarantees a lasting advantage on the queenside. Now there is time to improve the position of the other pieces and move them to their best places. The passive rook is bound for e2. In comparison, Black is deprived of meaningful counterplay, which the following stage of the struggle demonstrates painfully.

20...♕c7 21 f4 ♘g6 22 b3 ♘e7 23 ♗c4 ♖ae8 24 ♖e1 ♘c8 25 ♖ae2 ♖xe2 26 ♖xe2 ♕f7 27 ♖e6 ♖e8 28 ♕e2 ♔f8 29 ♗a3 ♖xe6 30 dxe6

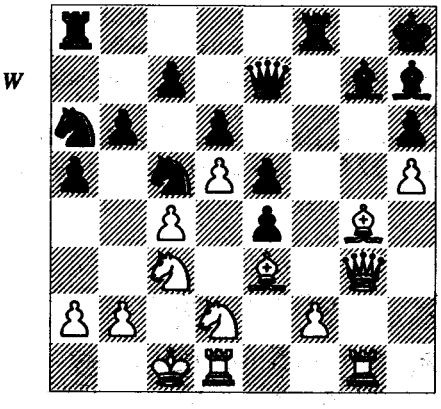
Black's apparently impenetrable position is starting to show serious cracks.

30...♕e7

30...♕c7 is not possible due to 31 e7+ ♕xe7 32 ♕e6, but the game continuation gives Black no chances either.

31 ♗d5 g6 32 ♕c2 ♕c7 33 ♗b2 ♕g7 34 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 35 c7 ♕d4 36 ♗b7 ♕xf4 37 ♕c4

White's huge spatial preponderance has been turned into a decisive material advantage.



Ivanisević – Ilinčić
Yugoslav Ch (Herceg Novi) 2001

Black's previous moves were ...♕f7-e7 and ...♗f5-h7.

24 ♔b1

It now becomes clear why Black cleared the f-file. His next move could be expected...

24...♖f4!

Owing to the h7-bishop, the f4-square is safe for the rook. Black brings in all his reserves.

25 ♖g2 ♖g8 26 ♖dg1 ♗f6 27 ♕h3 ♗g5

Black has moved his pieces to ideal posts, strengthening his grip on the kingside to the maximum.

28 a3

After 28 ♗xf4 exf4 the threat is 29...f3 as well as 29...e3+. Things get worse for White once the black knights make inroads.

28...♖f3 29 ♖g3

The rook is obviously still taboo, which allows Black to squeeze his opponent further. 29 ♕h2 would allow 29...♖xe3 30 fxe3 ♗xe3 with a clear advantage.

29...♖xf2!

Black continues the game of cat and mouse.

30 ♘f1

After 30 ♗xf2 e3+ 31 ♗f5 exf2 32 ♖d1 ♗xf5+ 33 ♕xf5 ♖f8 Black wins material.

30...♖ff8

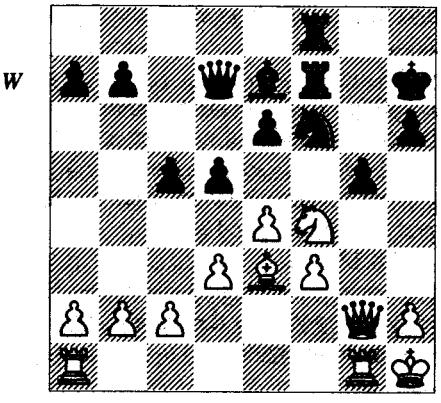
The warrior returns home triumphantly.

31 ♗xg5 ♖xg5 32 ♘e3 ♘d3 33 ♗e6 ♖f3!

The same old play counting with the latent threats on the h7-b1 diagonal paralyses White.

34 ♕h2 ♖gxg3 35 ♖xg3 ♘ac5 36 ♘b5 ♖f2 37 ♖g2 ♖xg2 38 ♕xg2 ♘xe6 39 dxe6 c6 40 ♘c3 ♕xe6

White has been outplayed; Black won shortly.

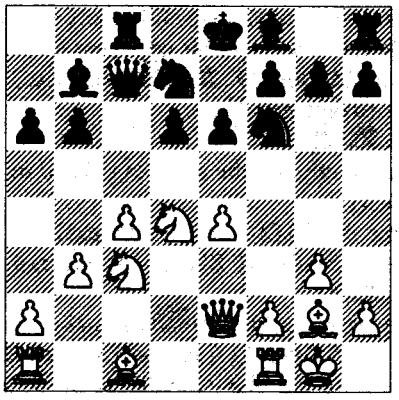


Bologan – Radjabov
Dortmund 2003

Black has just played 20...g7-g5, which appears not only to limit the pressure of the white major pieces on the g-file, but also to create difficulties for him on the f-file after the 'inevitable' retreat of the f4-knight. However, Black was struck by lightning:

21 ♘g6!!

Beautiful indeed. The knight cannot be captured because 21...♔xg6 22 ♗xg5 ♔h7 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♕g6+ ♔h8 25 ♕xh6+ leads to mate. The bad news is that the unwelcome intruder captures one of the rooks, winning an exchange while ceding no compensation whatever.



Kasparov – Salov
Barcelona 1989

Favouring other moves, Black postponed his kingside development. The king has stayed in the centre long enough to allow the following tactical blow:

12 ♘d5!

A tempting offer indeed, especially considering the consequences of not taking it. On the other hand, after 12...exd5 13 exd5+ ♔d8 14 ♗b2 we start asking ourselves "what can Black do?", and we find no good answer.

12...♕b8 13 ♖d1

Not an easy move to find. Now that Black may consider capturing the knight, the rook moves to the right position.

13...g6

After 13...exd5 14 exd5+ ♔d8 15 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 16 dxc6 ♘c5 17 b4 the d1-rook is well-placed. 13...e5 14 ♘f5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 g6 is hardly a solution due to 16 ♘d4.

14 ♗g5

The pressure increases heavily, while the proud knight cannot be touched as yet.

14...♗g7

14...exd5 15 exd5+ ♗e7 16 ♘c6 ♗xc6 17 dxc6 ♘e5 18 f4 is far from healthy for Black.

15 ♗xf6!

Simple but effective.

15...♘xf6

Black must forfeit the b6-pawn, because 15...♗xf6 loses to 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 e5 dxe5 (or 17...♗xg2 18 exf6 and now 18...♕b7 19 f3 or 18...♗h3 19 ♕e4 ♕a8 20 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 21 ♘c6) 18 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 19 ♕xe5 ♔e7 (19...♕e7 20 ♘c6) 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♖d6.

16 ♘xb6 ♖d8?!

Allowing the final breakthrough. 16...♖c7 was indispensable in order to cover the critical squares.

17 e5 ♗xg2

On 17...dxe5 Kasparov had in mind 18 ♘c6 ♗xc6 19 ♗xc6+ ♔e7 20 c5 ♕c7 21 ♕xa6.

18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘xe6!

The usual target – the king stranded in the centre and feebly protected by uncoordinated pieces.

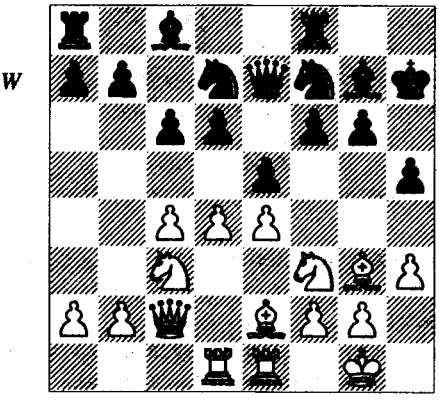
19...fxe6

This time the sacrifice must be accepted because 19...♕xb6 loses to 20 c5, while 19...♗xa1 20 ♘xd8+ ♔xd8 21 c5 ♖e8 22 ♕g4 is not attractive either.

20 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 21 c5 ♗b7 22 ♖e1 ♕c7 23 c6

An additional subtlety: the pawn sacrifice wins a tempo and speeds up the attack. Once the queen's rook is taking part, the attack crashes through.

23...♗xc6 24 ♖ac1 ♖d7 25 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 26 ♕c4 ♗b7 27 ♕c7 ♖f8 28 ♕b8+ ♔f7 29 ♖c7 1-0



Shulman – Ginsburg
Las Vegas 2001

Black has a passive but apparently solid King's Indian set-up.

16 ♘h4 ♗h6

It seemed that Black has prevented 17 f4, but Shulman was implacable and carried out the advance without further preparation...

17 f4!? exf4 18 e5 f5?!

18...♘h8 is correct, supporting the sensitive point g6, and only in case of 19 ♗xh5 should Black play 19...f5.

19 ♘xg6! ♔xg6 20 ♕xf5+!

This is a fine point of the preliminary knight sacrifice. The queen cannot be captured, and so White generates a strong initiative.

20...♔g7

20...♔xf5 21 ♗d3+ ♔g5 22 ♗xf4+ keeps the king under fire: 22...♔xf4 23 ♖e4+ and now 23...♔g5 24 h4+ or 23...♔f5 24 ♖g4+ leads to mate.

21 ♗d3 ♖h8 22 ♕g6+ ♔f8 23 e6 ♖g8

This is severely punished. 23...fxg3 puts up stronger resistance, given that 24 ♖f1 can be countered by 24...♗e3+ 25 ♔h1 ♗f2. White would continue with the stronger 24 exf7, when 24...♕xf7 25 ♕xd6+ ♔g8 26 ♕xg3+ keeps the king under fire; 26...♗g7 27 ♗g6 or 26...♕g7 27 ♕d6 remains difficult. In case of 24...♗e3+ 25 ♔h1 ♕g5 there is 26 ♕xd6+ ♔xf7 (or 26...♔g7 27 ♘e4 ♕f4 28 ♕e7 ♖f8 29 ♘d6) 27 ♖f1+ ♔e8 28 ♖de1 ♖h6 29 ♘e4!.

24 ♗h4! ♖xg6 25 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 26 exd7+ ♖e6 27 dxc8♕ 1-0

27...♖xc8 would lose material after 28 ♗f5.

In the following diagram, two pieces are hanging but White nevertheless continued:

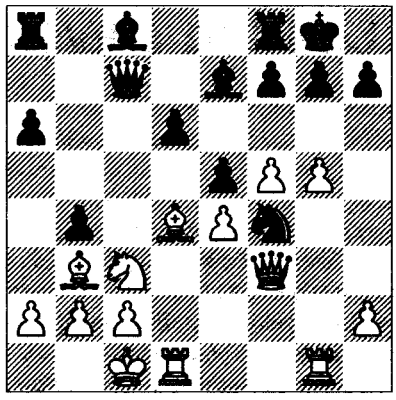
19 g6

He is ready to raise the stakes and reply with a sharp attack on the castled king. The combined effort of the rook on the g-file and the light-squared bishop create the conditions for success.

19...bxc3

When entering the complications, White had also taken into account 19...exd4 20 ♕xf4 bxc3 21 ♕h6!, 19...hxg6 20 ♕xf4! exf4 21 ♖xg6! and 19...♗f6 20 ♕xf4! exf4 21 ♗xf6, etc.

20 ♕xf4! ♔h8



Boto – Buntić
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2001

We have seen already that both 20...♗f6 and 20...exd4 come too late to defend the king's position due to the devastating 21 ♕h6. After 20...exf4 21 gxf7+ ♖xf7 22 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 23 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 24 f6 Black's position also breaks down quickly.

21 gxf7

Black must now be wary of 22 f6.

21...♗f6

21...♖xf7 22 ♗xf7 ♗f6 eliminates the threat of an eventual ♖g8+, but then 23 ♗d5 ♖b8 (or 23...exf4 24 ♗xf6) 24 ♗xc3 wins.

22 ♖xg7!

Many pieces are hanging but they are obviously all taboo. White threatens 23 ♖g8+.

22...♗xg7

22...♗e6 is also inadequate: 23 ♗xe6 ♗xg7 24 f6 ♖xf7 25 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 26 fxg7+ ♕xg7 27 ♗xc3.

23 f6 ♕d8 24 ♖g1 1-0

Too many motifs limited the defence to passive steps; Black never had a single moment of respite to accept the queen sacrifice.

The untouchable attacker is an unbearable burden. In the context of a hard psychological struggle, dealing with a piece sacrifice one cannot accept creates a feeling of impotence, which is in itself as damaging as all the other factors put together.

7 Lead in Development

When we refer to time, we usually imply initiative, but there is another very common form which time takes in a chess game. It's what we call a lead in development. Examining its origin we find at its root three common causes:

a) a certain disharmony in development, usually neglecting one or the other wing;

b) some greedy capture of material resulting in backward development;

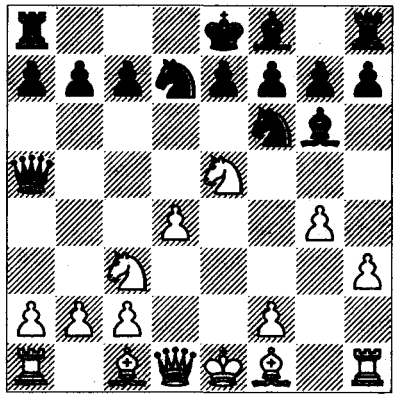
c) a plan leading to careless exchanges putting the opponent in the lead.

In all these cases the inferior side is left behind in the race to develop, and enters the critical phase of the game confronted with superior enemy forces, which will occupy active positions. When material has been grabbed, the activity generated by the enemy pieces, mostly in the centre or on the open files and diagonals, may well be enough to compensate for the material. This compensation may also take the form of a spatial advantage or better control of key squares and lines. Less common but very characteristic is the case of ill-considered exchanges. Careless exchanges of the developed pieces lead us into positions in which our lesser number of developed pieces gives the impression that our opponent was allowed some extra moves. Why is that so?

Exchanging pieces is a sensitive process, a fact weaker players often overlook entirely when playing chess. Especially sensitive is the exchange of dominant centralized pieces. Firstly, such an exchange diminishes the pressure and usually helps the opponent to reach the same level of development. Secondly, it tends to throw away the tempi used to centralize that piece. It takes time to create a strategic position in the centre and to occupy it. A strong outpost, a centralized piece in general, or any strong piece anywhere on the board does not just happen. It takes a couple of moves, at least, to move it there. Its positional value is a result of invested time. The built-in tempi have been transformed into its privileged position on the board and consequently into its positional influence. Experienced players know that especially simplifying exchanges should be avoided when our opponent has been forced into a cramped position. An unprovoked exchange of such a piece simply means a loss of time. Therefore, exchanges of this kind leave the impression that the inferior side played fewer moves. As a matter of fact, what we have here is just a case of misguided transformation of values. We shall deal with them in the following series of illustrative examples.

However, to start with, we must be cautious about the expression 'lead in development', lest we be misunderstood. What I mean exactly will be clearer upon examination of the next game.

W



Alekhine – Schroeder
New York blindfold simul 1924

Just a few moves have been played in this game. What strikes the eye is Black's decision to play his Scandinavian Defence without moving his pawns as yet. The wayward bishop on g6 could hardly be recognized as a good reason for it. No wonder that events started to unfold ominously for Black.

9 ♘c4 ♕a6 10 ♗f4

Black's queen is in danger. Threatened by 11 ♘d6+, it finds the last refuge left...

10...♕e6+ 11 ♘e3 0-0-0??

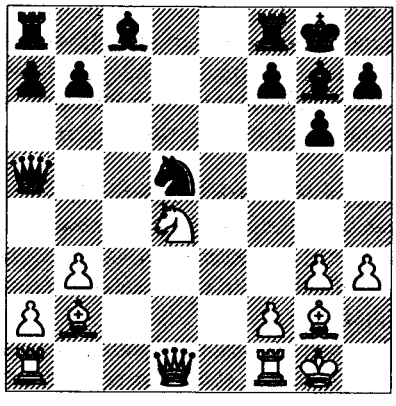
This is catastrophic, but one could hardly call 11...♘b6? 12 d5 ♕d7 13 ♗b5 or 11...c6? 12 ♗c4 appealing. However, surprising as it may seem, Black does have a way to put up resistance: 11...♕b6 has been played in several games with reasonable results. The critical continuation is 12 g5 e5. For more information see John Watson's *Chess Strategy in Action*, p.205.

12 d5 ♕b6 13 ♘c4 ♕b4 14 a3 ♕c5 15 ♗e3 1-0

When one looks at the final position and starts counting, one finds out that Black is formally better developed than White. He developed as many pieces as White and apart from that he castled. However, then we notice also that all the black pawns are still in their initial places. When we speak of the lead in development, we obviously imply something more than dragging pieces out in a disorderly manner. What we imply in the first place is the harmonious activity of pawns and pieces. In our example Schroeder's pawns and pieces seem to belong to different games, while Alekhine's forces act in complete harmony.

Such a disparity, however, although not so common in master chess, matches well the cases on the other end of the range, characterized by microscopic differences in development. However, even such almost invisible imbalances represent a serious latent danger. I recall an old game by two Soviet grandmasters, which troubled me for a long time.

W



Kotov – Bronstein
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1945

At first sight the material balance and relative simplicity of the position in front of us suggest a peaceful draw. However, upon closer inspection we find that the good coordination of the white pieces creates certain difficulties for Black. The centralized d4-knight prevents Black's normal development and keeps the tension in White's favour.

16 ♕f3 ♖d8 17 ♖fd1 h5 18 a3 ♕b6 19 ♖d2 h4

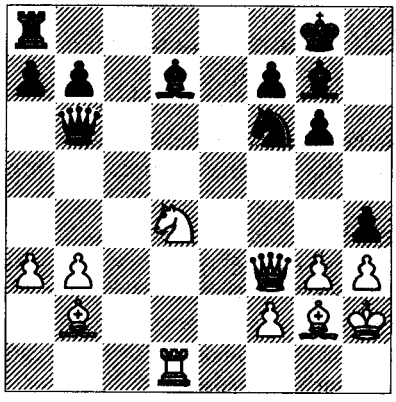
While White methodically increases the pressure, Black invests time in this pawn advance, by which he hopes to bring about some favourable circumstances in the endgame, but for the moment it does not really weaken the white king's position.

20 ♖ad1 ♘f6 21 ♔h2 ♖e8 22 ♖e2

An exchange in which an active enemy piece is traded is always useful.

22...♖xe2 23 ♕xe2 ♗d7 24 ♕f3 *(D)*

B



24...♖e8?!

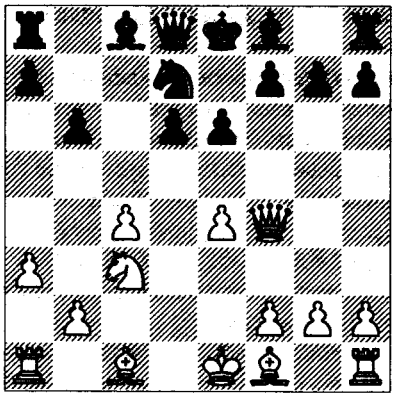
Tired of passive defence, Black decides to seek active counter-chances. It's a risky decision, given that White has no critical weaknesses. The patient 24...♖b8 therefore looks logical.

25 ♕xb7 ♕d6 26 ♕f3 ♕e5 27 ♖d2 hxg3+ 28 fxg3 ♕g5 29 ♗c1 ♘e4 30 ♖d1 ♕d5 31 ♘c2 ♕c6 32 ♕d3 ♗f5 33 ♘b4 ♕c8 34 ♕c4

Black's temporary initiative was slowly dwindling away and he could not show enough for the sacrificed material. White's microscopic spatial advantage and barely visible lead in development eventually paid off beautifully. After the exchange of queens Kotov managed to turn his material advantage into victory.

More often, however, the lead in development is stronger accentuated. Among its various causes we recognize a certain disharmony in development, when for one reason or another the development of one wing is postponed and the positional imbalance caused by it influences the struggle for a long time.

W



Avrukh – Sutovsky
Israeli Ch (Tel Aviv) 2002

Sutovsky has waited too long to develop his kingside. The next move emphasizes it pointedly.

10 ♕g3!

By targeting the g7-pawn, Avrukh makes it clear at once that the black king will remain stranded in the centre for some time to come. The d6-pawn is also under pressure, so ...g6 isn't an easy solution for Black.

10...♗a6?!

The counter-pressure on c4 will not succeed, which raises doubts about the whole idea.

11 ♗g5

The c4-pawn will need protection and the c1-square must be vacated for the rook as soon as possible.

11...♕c7 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 ♗e2 h6

13...♕b8 is better.

14 ♗e3 ♕b7?!

A new waste of time. Again the queen would be better placed at b8.

15 b3 ♘f6 16 ♗f3 ♕b8 17 0-0 ♗b7 18 ♖fd1

It's as if Black marched on the spot, while White improved the position of his pieces in a most natural manner.

18...♕a8 19 ♘b5

White is looking to swap the e4-pawn for the d6-pawn. Why not? It can only suit the active white pieces. However, Black's options are severely limited given that he is still pinned down to defending the g7-pawn.

19...♗xe4

If 19...♘xe4, then 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 21 ♗f4 (but not 21 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 22 ♕xg7? ♖h7).

20 ♗e2!

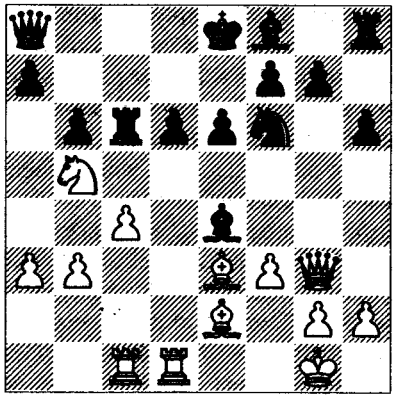
A nice detail: White will capture on d6 when it pleases him.

20...♖c6

Unfortunately 20...a6 is insufficient due to 21 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 22 ♖xd6 winning a pawn. The text-move defends all, but in such a cumbersome manner that we must expect it to have some drawbacks.

21 f3 *(D)*

B



21...♘h5

Black would prefer 21...♗g6, but then 22 ♘d4 ♘h5 23 ♕h3 ♖c8 24 ♘xe6 demolishes the defence. As a matter of fact, the text-move does not change things. 22 ♕h3 would have led to the same winning line. Avrukh made use of his advantage in a more devious, but impressive manner.

22 ♕g4 ♘f6 23 ♕h4 ♗g6 24 c5!

When the inferior side is so backward in development it is no wonder that tactical motifs abound. The idea is to pin from a4.

24...bxc5

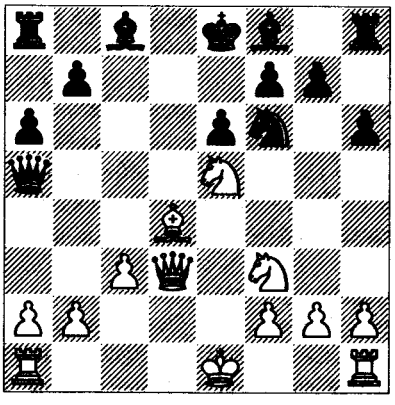
No better is 24...dxc5 25 ♕a4 ♘d7 26 ♖d2!, when Black cannot stand the pressure on the open file.

25 ♕a4 ♘d7 26 ♘xa7 ♖c7

Unfortunately, 26...♖b6 fails to 27 ♖xc5.

27 ♘b5 ♕xa4 28 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 29 ♘xe6+ fxe6 30 bxa4 ♔c7 31 ♗b5 ♘b6 32 ♗f4

Black doesn't have any compensation for the exchange.



B

Bruzon – Granda
Havana (Capablanca mem) 2003

When the players reached this position, Black was already visibly lagging behind in his development. While White, making use of his opponent's misjudgements, installed his pieces in powerful central positions, Black squandered several tempi and is now confronted with difficult problems.

16...♕d5

This seems to discourage queenside castling and represents a good answer to the threat of 17 ♘c4 (which can now be met by 17...♗c5), but it does nothing to improve the critical state of Black's development.

17 0-0-0!

Despite appearances, a hidden tactical point makes it possible to castle queenside, enhancing the development advantage.

17...b5

17...♕xa2 would be punished by 18 ♘g6!.

Black would prefer 17...♗e7, but notices that 18 ♘g6 hits him again and costs him a lot of material: 18...♖g8 19 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 20 ♗xf6+ followed by 21 ♕h7. The king stays put at e8 and the queenside takes precedence.

18 ♖he1

After 18 ♘g6 ♖g8 19 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♗xf6 ♕xd3 White has achieved nothing because the g2-pawn will be hanging. Therefore the quiet text-move eliminates ...♕e4 and plans 19 ♘g6 ♖g8 20 ♘f4, increasing the pressure to a maximum.

18...♗d6

Necessary in order to exclude the aforementioned knight manoeuvre, but the development of the kingside comes an important tempo late.

19 c4! bxc4

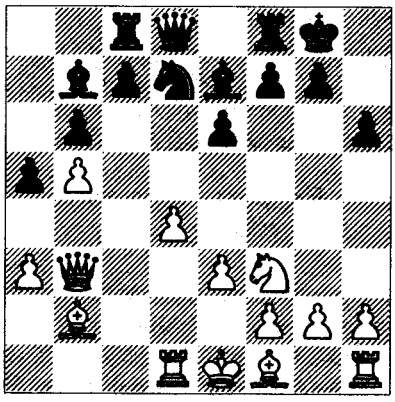
19...♕b7 20 c5 ♗e7 21 c6 is not a great alternative for Black.

20 ♘xc4 ♗b7 21 ♘b6 ♕xa2

21...♕c6+ 22 ♔b1 ♖d8 would save the exchange, but 23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♖xe6+ opens the king to a decisive attack.

22 ♗xf6

No good moves remain for Black.



B

Karpov – J. Polgar
Wijk aan Zee 2003

In contrast to Black's natural development, the postponed development of the white kingside strikes the eye. It does not surprise us that under the circumstances Black opens the play favourably.

14...c6 15 bxc6

In view of what is coming, 15 ♗e2 is stronger.

15...♗xc6 16 ♗b5?

16 ♗a6 ♖c7 17 0-0 is indispensable, although 17...a4 (stronger than 17...b5 18 ♗xb5 ♖b7 19 a4 ♕b8 20 ♗a3 ♗xb5 21 axb5 ♖xb5 22 ♕a2 ♗b4 23 ♖c1) 18 ♕d3 ♕a8 19 ♕e2 ♖b8 promises Black a pleasant future.

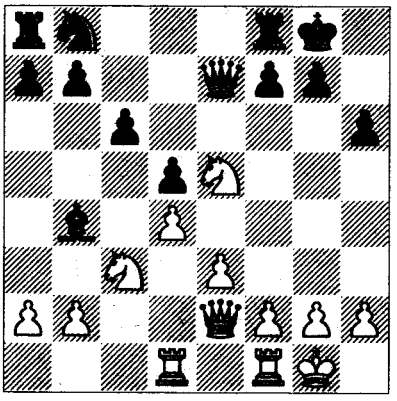
16...♗b4+ 17 axb4 ♗xb5 18 bxa5 ♗c4 19 ♕a3

19 ♕a4 bxa5 20 ♗c3 raises more questions. Polgar planned to continue 20...♕f6! 21 ♕xd7 ♕g6, threatening 22...♕xg2 as well as 22...♕c2 with a strong initiative.

19...bxa5 20 ♕d6?! ♗b5

Having lost the chance of castling and without piece coordination, White has insurmountable problems.

B



Petrosian – Pachman
Stockholm IZ 1962

At the transition into the middlegame, Black could now finish his development by the natural 13...♘d7, but, probably seeing ghosts, he wanted to hinder White's plan of f4 and ♖f3.

13...♖e8?! 14 ♕g4!

White is intent on hindering Black's development.

14...♗d6?

This move neglects development at a critical point – transition into the middlegame. The greedy 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♕a3 would be punished by 16 ♖d3! followed by 17 e4 and a strong attack, so 14...f6 was suggested as better, but the ghastly hole which it permanently creates on g6 repels us from the idea. 14...♕e6 is correct.

15 e4!

A simple, perennial chess truth stands behind this thematic break: when the position opens up, it always favours the more active side. What is more, events start to develop in an increasingly forcing manner. The active side widens its options, while the passive one is compelled to navigate through the narrow straits.

15...dxe4

15...♗xe5 16 dxe5 ♕xe5 17 f4 ♕e7 18 exd5 is not at all appealing for Black.

16 ♘xe4 f6

Again 16...♗xe5 17 dxe5 ♕xe5 does not work, this time due to 18 ♘d6 ♖f8 19 b3 b6 20 ♖fe1 with a huge advantage in space and development.

17 f4!

16...f6 failed to deter the knight.

17...♗c7

17...fxe5 18 fxe5 ♗c7 19 ♘f6+ does not look healthy for Black. On the other hand, 17...♗b4 can be answered by 18 a3 ♗a5 19 ♘g3 fxe5 20 ♘f5.

18 ♘g3!

Finally Black is compelled to accept the sacrifice. Considering the rueful state of his queenside, the timing is no better than earlier.

18...fxe5 19 ♘f5 ♕f6 20 dxe5 h5

It is too late for a counter-sacrifice: 20...♗xe5 21 fxe5 ♖xe5 loses to 22 ♖d6 ♕g5 23 ♕c4+ ♔h7 24 ♕f7, etc. The text-move brings just a futile moment of respite and then things go steeply downhill.

21 ♕xh5 ♕f7 22 ♕g4 ♖e6 23 ♖f3 ♖g6 24 ♕xg6 ♕xg6 25 ♘e7+ ♔f7 26 ♘xg6 ♔xg6 27 g4 ♘a6 28 ♖d7 ♖d8

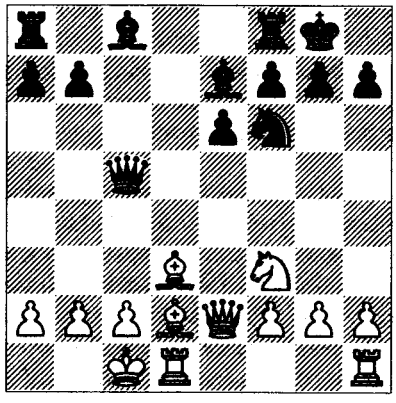
Or 28...♖g8 29 h4.

29 f5+ ♔g5 30 ♖xg7+ ♔h4 31 e6

White's victory is inevitable.

31...♗b6+ 32 ♔f1 ♖d1+ 33 ♔e2 ♖d5 34 f6 ♖e5+ 35 ♔f1 ♘c5 36 ♖f5 1-0

W



Keres – Petrov
Estonia – Lithuania 1939

13 ♘e5

It is clear that Black has difficulties finishing his development. Moreover, the harmoniously placed white pieces point towards his kingside. The following moves will emphasize these two details.

13...b6 14 g4! ♗b7 15 g5 ♘d5

There is no time for 15...♗xh1 due to 16 gxf6 ♗xf6 (16...gxf6 loses to 17 ♖g1+ ♔h8 18 ♕g4 followed by mate) 17 ♘d7 ♕c6 18 ♘xf6+ gxf6 19 ♕g4+ ♔h8 20 ♕h4 with a mating attack.

16 ♖hg1

Instead of falling for 16 ♘d7?!, after which 16...♕c7 17 ♘xf8 ♘f4 levels the play, White builds up his attack consistently, preparing the rook-lift on the fourth rank.

16...♕c7 17 ♖g4

17 ♗xh7+ is not so clear and Keres sticks wisely to the original plan.

17...g6

17...f5 is not so good as some annotators would have us believe. Instead of playing 18 gxf6 ♗xf6 or 18 ♖h4 ♗d6 19 ♘c4 ♘f4, White can continue 18 ♖c4 ♕d8 19 g6 with an advantage.

18 ♖h4 ♗d6

Parrying the threat of 19 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 20 ♕h5+.

19 ♘g4

The holes left around the king cannot be repaired. Black is lost and it took just a few moves to prove it...

19...♖fc8

If 19...♗f4 then 20 ♘f6+.

20 ♔b1

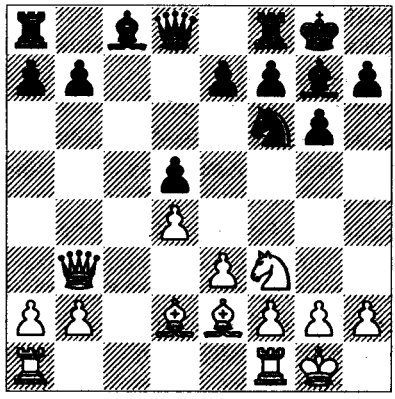
Again avoiding either 20...♗f4 or 20...♘f4.

20...b5 21 ♖g1 ♗e7 22 ♘h6+ ♔f8 23 ♘xf7

and the house of cards started to collapse. This time the lead in development has been transformed into a huge space advantage which yielded the final attack.

A rarer but quite characteristic cause of backward development are ill-considered exchanges that waste tempi. Positional values imply the time used to build them. Whenever we disregard that fact and exchange actively posted pieces, we squander the precious time invested in their construction. Each time it happens the balance is endangered and quite often upturned.

B



Rubinstein – Bogoljubow
Vienna 1922

Black has not played the opening in an exemplary way. As a result, he feels the pressure on b7 and the queenside in general. Facing the appearance of the white rooks on the open file, it is imperative to develop the queen's bishop. The fianchetto by 11...b6 instead of diminishing the pressure would invite the unpleasant 12 a4. 11...♗g4 looks better, when 12 ♕xb7 is met by 12...♖b8 13 ♕xa7 ♖xb2, while 12 ♖fc1 is best opposed by 12...♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♕d7 followed by 14...♖fc8. Black, however, thought that he could solve his difficulties in another manner.

11...♘e4? 12 ♖fd1 ♘xd2 13 ♖xd2 ♕d6

It is true that on d6 the queen cannot be harassed any more by the b4-bishop, but by squandering time on the exchange, Black helped White in his strategic plan of doubling rooks on the c-file.

14 ♖c1 b6 15 ♖dc2 ♗b7 16 ♕a4!

16 ♖c7 ♖fc8 gets White nowhere, so before penetrating to the seventh rank White makes sure that Black cannot defend in this way. In order to protect the a7-pawn a new investment of time is needed.

16...a6 17 ♖c7 b5 18 ♕a5

The lead in development has been transformed into new pluses: command of the open file and a complex of strong dark squares. Black's camp is completely open to penetration.

18...♖ab8

18...♖fc8 is no better due to 19 ♖1c5.

19 ♖1c5 ♖fd8 20 ♘e5!

White's pieces invade.

20...♗f6

20...♗xe5 21 dxe5 ♕xe5 loses to 22 ♖xb7.

21 ♘c6 e6 22 g3!

22 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 would vacate d8 for the bishop, but White can afford this tempo to capture the exchange under more favourable circumstances.

22...♖dc8 23 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 24 ♗xb5!

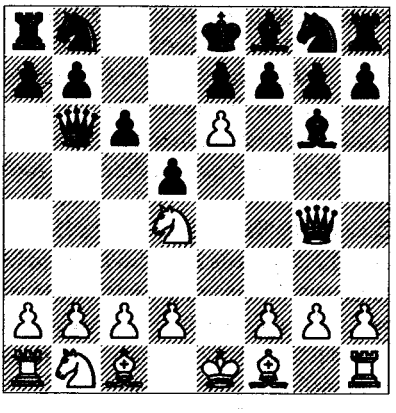
Various positional advantages have been accumulated, which results in this new metamorphosis. The spatial advantage has been transformed into material and it's the beginning of the end. After 24...axb5, 25 ♕a7 wins simply. The rest of the game is of little relevance to our topic.

Tolush – Kotov
USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1939
Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘d4?!

Strangely, this was not the first time that Tolush had used this bizarre move, although he must have known it was to say the least an unprincipled attempt. However, let us see what will come out of it.

4...♗g6 5 e6 ♕b6 6 ♕g4 *(D)*



This was the point of the idea: exf7+ will spoil Black's normal development, while the subsequent ♕c8 may cause some unpleasant moments. However, it was just wishful thinking, because White has also disrupted his own natural development.

6...c5 7 exf7+ ♔xf7 8 ♘f3 ♘f6 9 ♕c8

White had probably flirted with 9 ♘g5+ ♔g8 or 9 ♘e5+ ♔g8, but neither 10 ♕e6+ ♕xe6+ 11 ♘xe6 ♘bd7 in the first case nor 10 ♕c8 ♗xc2 in the second could satisfy him.

9...♕e6+ 10 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4+ ♔f7 13 c3 e5

As a result of his erroneous opening plan, White has been forced to exchange his developed pieces and cede the centre to Black. It looks as if White was playing at odds of a couple of moves.

14 ♘f3 ♗d6 15 ♘bd2 ♘c6 16 ♗e2 ♖he8 17 0-0 ♗c5

Black has a huge spatial advantage with all the comforts deriving from it.

Larsen – Berger
Amsterdam IZ 1964
Bishop's Opening

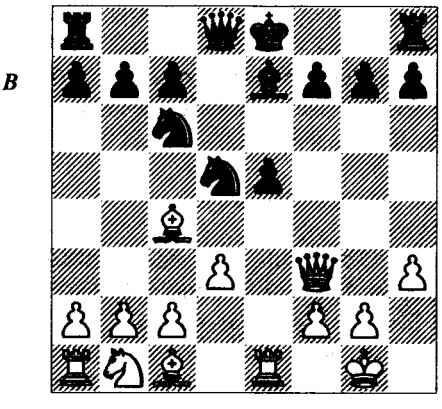
1 e4 e5 2 ♗c4 ♘f6 3 d3 d5?!

This ambitious advance weakens the e5-pawn, which will soon find itself under unpleasant pressure.

4 exd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 0-0 ♗g4?

The e5-pawn can be fortified only by a later ...f6. Bringing the bishop to g4 instead involves a clear loss of time.

7 ♖e1 ♗e7 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 *(D)*



As a result of the Black's dubious exchange, White has taken a lead in development.

9...♘d4!?

Parrying the pressure by 9...♘f6 is not very appealing due to 10 ♗b5.

The text-move is the best under the circumstances. Black is offering 10 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 11 ♗xd5 ♘xc2 and now 12 ♗xb7 ♘xe1 or 12 ♖xe5 c6. The problem is that in the conditions

of severely backward development he is compelled to overstretch, which Larsen's next move makes all too clear.

10 ♕g4!

Challenging Black to play 10...♘xc2, when 11 ♖xe5 ♘f6 (11...c6 loses to 12 ♕xg7 ♖f8 13 ♖xd5) 12 ♕xg7 ♔d7 13 ♗g5! forebodes nothing good for Black.

10...0-0?!

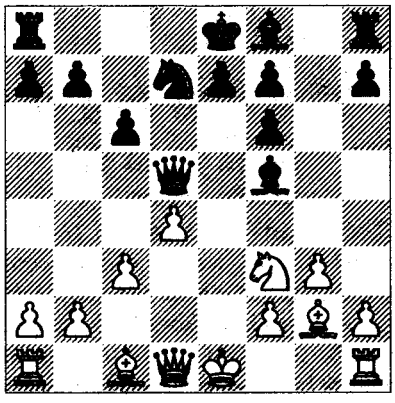
Sacrificing a pawn in order to finish development is hardly a satisfactory solution, given the ineffective state of his counterplay. At least 10...♕d6 would be consistent, offering 11 ♕xg7 ♗f6 or 11 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 12 ♕xg7 0-0-0. Larsen planned to continue quietly 11 ♘a3.

11 ♖xe5 ♘f6 12 ♕d1 ♗d6 13 ♖e1

Black has no compensation for the pawn. His aggressive development based on illogical exchanges cost time which has been transformed into material.

Unjustified exchanges can prove especially compromising when under threat of attack.

B



Westermayer – Marović
Cala d'Or 1983

White's fianchetto is a reliable structure against this variation, in which Black would like to exploit the open g-file for counterplay. However, its shortcoming lies in the fact that Black can prevent White from castling at an early stage.

9...♕c4

This idea, which I learnt from Gligorić, represents the point of the early centralization of the black queen: by preventing White from castling for the time being, Black robs the fianchetto of its edge.

10 ♗f4?!

In an old game Fletzer-Gligorić, Venice 1949, White continued 10 ♗e3 ♘b6 11 ♘d2 ♕a6 12 ♗f1 ♕a5 13 ♗e2, securing the right to castle, but after 13...♘d5 Black stood fine. The text-move is certainly not an improvement.

10...e5

The provocative 10 ♗f4 demanded this energetic answer while the white king is in the centre. Opening the position should favour Black.

11 dxe5?!

It is understandable that having developed the bishop to f4 White is not much inclined to retreat, but keeping the centre closed by 11 ♗e3 was a healthier attitude. Now by castling queenside, Black can bring his rook into action on the d-file at once and the d7-knight can threaten the white king in two jumps.

11...0-0-0

During the game I spent a long time deciding between this move and 11...♘c5. What I did not like about the knight move was the bizarre-looking 12 ♕e2, when 12...♘d3+ 13 ♔f1 blocks Black's counterplay; for example, 13...fxe5 (or 13...♘xb2 14 exf6+) 14 ♗xe5 (14 ♘xe5 loses to 14...♘xe5). 12...♗d3 forces the king to stay on e1, but then 13 ♕e3 exposes the black king as well. Thus castling prevailed in my thoughts.

12 ♕e2

12 ♗f1 ♕e4+ or 12 ♘d2 ♕b5 was not particularly appealing and after a long thought my opponent placed his hopes on a forcing line.

12...♗d3 13 ♕d2 fxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5

Relying on finding sanctuary by castling queenside, White is not concerned by 15...♖e8. 15...♕e6 can be parried by 16 ♕e3 ♗h6 17 ♗f4 ♖he8 18 0-0-0, while 15...♗f1 fails to 16 ♗xf1 ♕e4+ 17 ♕e2 ♕xh1 18 ♕g4+ ♖d7 19 ♖d1. At the same time Black must bear in mind that his own king is vulnerable to ♗h3+. However, nothing changes the fact that the white king is still on e1, open to attack. The numerous exchanges in the centre have made it fully exposed and vulnerable.

15...♗g7!

An important tempo: given that 16 ♗xg7 loses to 16...♖he8+, White must further expose

his king. Black's lead in development, seized by the pawn sacrifice, grows move by move.

16 f4 ♗e4

After 16...♗xe5 17 fxe5, 17...♗e4 can be met by 18 ♕f4, but Black has a path to victory with 17...♗f1 18 ♕f2 ♗xg2 19 ♕xg2 ♖he8. The text-move complicates the win.

17 ♗h3+ f5 18 ♕e2

The best under the circumstances, but not enough.

18...♕xe2+ 19 ♔xe2 ♗xe5 20 fxe5 ♗xh1 21 ♗xf5+ ♔c7 22 ♖xh1 ♖d5 23 g4 ♖xe5+ 24 ♔f3 h5

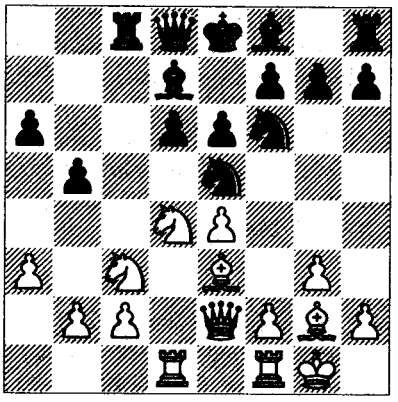
The awkward position of the white pieces allows Black to penetrate to the second rank.

25 h4 ♖f8 26 ♔f4 ♖e2 27 ♔g5 hxg4 0-1

White's neglected development, enhanced by self-inflicted exchanges, opened the way for strong counterplay.

In general though, the most common causes of backward development are illogical attempts to gain a material advantage at the cost of harmonious activity. The choice of material is huge indeed, but the subject is so popular and widely known that we shall limit the selected illustrative examples to but a few pages.

B



Ravinsky – Panov
Moscow 1943

The opening has developed nicely for Black; so nicely in fact that he decided to cash in his advantage immediately. Panov continued...

12...♘c4 13 ♗c1 ♘xa3? 14 e5!

Active pieces make possible active play. The central thrust catches Black on the wrong foot – with his knight astray on a3 and his kingside undeveloped.

14...dxe5 15 ♘c6 ♕c7 16 ♘xe5 ♘c4 17 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18 ♘d5

The first palpable compensation: the black king will have to stay put for some time against the growing pressure.

18...♕a7

18...♕e5 19 ♕f3 just exposes Black's queen.

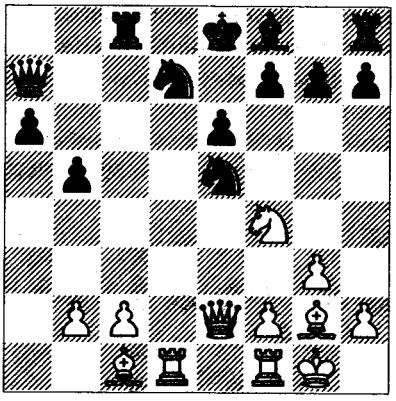
19 ♘f4

20 ♘xe6, a sacrifice so characteristic of the Sicilian, is in the air, but little can be done to avert it.

19...♘ce5 *(D)*

19...♕b6 20 b3 ♘ce5 21 ♗b2 is also unpleasant for Black.

W



20 ♖xd7! ♘xd7 21 ♘xe6 fxe6 22 ♕xe6+

A whole rook has been sacrificed in order to expose the king, but against the coordinated attacking force stands a disoriented defence.

22...♗e7

The black king still cannot run from the danger: 22...♔d8 loses to 23 ♗g5+ ♔c7 24 ♕c6+ ♔b8 25 ♗f4+ with mate.

23 ♖e1 ♕c5

Nothing better can be done against the pin. 23...♘b6 loses to 24 ♗g5 ♖c7 25 ♗c6+ ♔f8 26 ♖e3, etc.

24 b4!

The g5-square is in question.

24...♘f8

After 24...♕xb4 25 ♗g5 the only continuation is 25...♕xe1+ 26 ♕xe1 ♘f6, but 27 ♕e6 ♖xc2 28 ♗c6+ ♔f8 29 ♗xf6 leaves no hope for Black.

25 ♕g4!

With the c8-rook targeted, Black's manoeuvring space is very limited.

25...♕c3

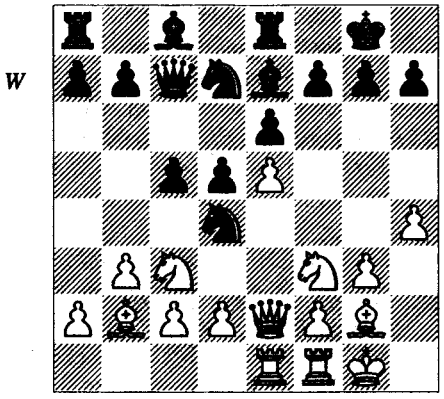
25...♕c7 would not prevent 26 ♖xe7+ since 26...♕xe7 loses to 27 ♕xc8+ ♔f7 28 ♗d5+ ♔f6 29 ♕c3+ ♕e5 30 ♗g5+.

26 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 27 ♗g5+ ♔d6

Or 27...♔e8 28 ♕e2+ ♔f7 29 ♗d5+ ♔g6 30 ♕e4+ ♔xg5 31 ♕f4+ ♔h5 32 ♗f7+ g6 33 ♕h4#.

28 ♕d1+ ♔c7 29 ♗f4+ ♔b6 30 ♕d6+ ♔a7 31 ♕e7+

and White wins. Black paid a heavy price for the pawn he grabbed.



Simagin – Bibikov
Moscow 1949

Black has just played 12...♘c6-d4. Although not properly developed, he jumped at the chance to win material: on 13 ♕d1 he wins the e5-pawn by 13...♘xf3+ followed by 14...♘xe5; in case of 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 his queen will grab the c2-pawn for starters. It seemed clever, but the picture was not complete.

13 ♘xd4! cxd4 14 ♘d1 ♕xc2 15 ♗xd4 ♕xa2 16 ♘c3 ♕xb3

This is how Bibikov calculated, but there was more to it...

17 ♘xd5! exd5?!

Black clings to his gains. 17...♗d8 is better, although 18 ♘f4 gives White a kingside attack.

18 e6!

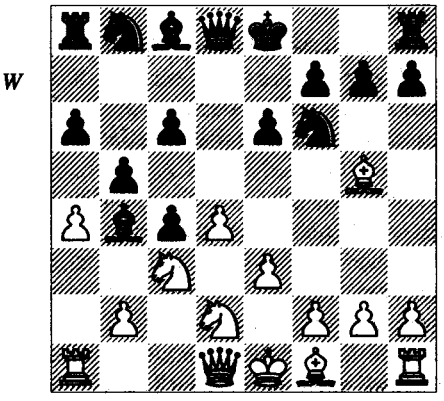
Black has been caught napping. His pieces are either undeveloped or badly placed to meet the direct threats.

18...f6

Black is compelled to accept this bone in his throat, even though the consequences are dire. 18...♘f8 loses to 19 exf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕h5+ g6 21 ♗xd5+. For the same reason, the unfavourable position of the queen at b3, 18...♘f6 fails to 19 exf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♕h5+ ♔f8 22 ♗xd5, etc.

19 ♕h5 g6 20 exd7 ♗xd7 21 ♗xd5+ ♔g7 22 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 23 ♗xf6+ 1-0

Like Panov above, Bibikov was greedy, but he paid a heavy price for the material.



Van der Werf – Piket
Amsterdam 2000

This is an old theoretical line which has been revived recently. The game continued along the trodden path:

9 axb5 cxb5 10 ♘xb5 axb5 11 ♖xa8 ♗b7 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 ♖a1

White has taken a dangerous road: he won an exchange, but at the cost of backward development. I landed unprepared in a very similar position in Marović-Pomar, Olot 1969 (...h6 and ♗h4 had been inserted) and had to face 14...♖g8, which seemed rather unpleasant. White has no time for 15 f3, because 15...f5 16 g3 f4 leads him to difficulties and I continued 15 ♗e2 ♖xg2 (on 15...♗xg2 16 ♖g1 ♕d6 I had in mind 17 f4 e5 18 ♗f3 exd4 19 ♕e2) 16 ♔f1 ♗xd2 17 ♕xd2 ♕d5 18 f3 ♕g5 19 h4 ♕g6 when 20 d5! turned the tide against Black; after 20...♘d7 21 dxe6 fxe6 22 ♖d1 ♗c6 23 ♗d3 he was lost. A quarter of a century later during an analysis session of the

Croatian national team, Hulak came up with an improvement, the move Piket plays in our game...

13...e5!

This is much more difficult to meet than 13...♖g8.

Now the attempt to develop by 14 ♗e2 fails to 14...♗xg2 (14...exd4 is weaker: 15 ♗f3 dxe3 16 0-0) 15 ♖g1 ♕d5 16 f3 exd4. Trying to escape the pin and castle queenside after 14 dxe5 and 15 ♕c2 is like running out of the rain and into the shower. 14 ♕h5 calmed us a little, but we left the session with the feeling that White's position stinks.

14 ♕h5?

We examined this move and dismissed it, because it does not solve the imperative of development. Coming home I started to dig again and came to the conclusion that drastic measures are necessary. I looked into 14 ♗xc4!? bxc4 and now 15 ♕a4+ (it is essential to close the long light diagonal one way or another) 15...♘c6 16 0-0 ♗xd2 (or 16...♕d5 17 e4 ♕xd4 18 ♕b5) 17 ♖fd1 (my first idea was to prevent the centralization of the black queen by 17 ♕b5, but after 17...♕d7 18 ♖fd1 there is 18...♘a5) 17...♕d5 (if 17...♗b4, then 18 ♕b5) 18 ♖xd2, which looked like a way out of the predicament; after 18...♖g8 19 f3 ♕xf3 there is 20 dxe5 (but not 20 d5 ♕xe3+ 21 ♖f2 ♕c5 22 dxc6 ♖xg2+!) 20...♕xe3+ (or 20...fxe5 21 ♖ad1) 21 ♖f2 fxe5 22 ♕b5 (but not 22 ♕xc4 ♖xg2+!). In the end I did not like the quiet 18...0-0 and turned to 15 0-0 with the intention of 15...♕d5 16 f3 (if 16 e4 then 16...♕b5) 16...exd4 17 ♘e4 followed by 18 ♕xd4 or 15...♖g8 16 f3 exd4 17 ♕a4+ ♘c6 18 ♕b5, seeking a way out of the complications.

14...♘c6

The continuation reveals that White was not afraid of 14...♗xd2+ 15 ♔xd2, although it is not self-evident and is open to question. However, the alternative 14...♕d5 15 ♖d1 exd4 16 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 17 exd4 ♘c6 is advantageous to Black, while 14...♕d6 and 14...♗e4 are also difficult to meet.

15 ♖d1 exd4?!

This move leads to unnecessary simplification. 15...♘a5!? 16 ♔e2 ♗xd2 17 ♖xd2 ♘b3 18 ♖d1 ♗e4 would keep the white king in a perilous position.

16 ♕xb5 c3 17 bxc3 dxc3 18 ♕xb7 cxd2+ 19 ♔e2 ♕d5 20 ♕c8+ ♔e7 21 ♕c7+ ♔e6 22 ♕f4

Parrying the obvious threat of ...♘d4+. 22 f3 is inferior: 22...♗d6 23 ♕b6 ♖b8 24 ♕a6 ♖b3.

22...♕b5+ 23 ♔f3 ♕d5+ 24 ♔e2

Black eventually had to content himself with a draw.

This is one of those theoretical positions that question the relation between material and time in the opening phase in a dramatic and most instructive manner. The exchange is won, but at the cost of some precious tempi which, if invested properly into counterplay, turn the tide against White.

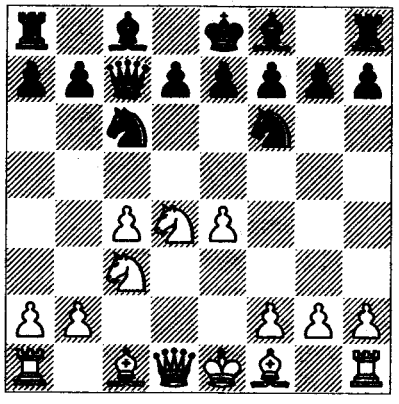
Grishchuk – Hraček

Bundesliga 2002/3

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕c7 5 c4 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



It was this early in the game that Black, owing to the particular move-order, decided to go in for a material gain.

6...♘xe4 7 ♘xe4 ♕e5 8 ♘b5 ♕xe4+ 9 ♗e2 ♕e5 10 f4 ♕b8 11 0-0

It is quite clear that White sees his lead in development as sufficient compensation for the pawn.

11...e6 12 f5 a6 13 ♘c3 ♗d6

By attacking the h2-pawn, Black hopes to earn time, but convinced of the value of quick development and spatial advantage, White gives up another pawn.

14 ♘e4! ♗xh2+ 15 ♔h1 ♗e5?!

Black should be cautious and start worrying about his backward development. 15...exf5 16 ♖xf5 d5 looks to me more logical under the circumstances.

16 f6!

Taking into consideration that the lead in development and dominance in space are White's strong cards, this is fully consistent.

16...g6

The king's future is now lastingly endangered, but 16...gxf6 weakens his position in the centre; White can proceed by 17 ♖xf6.

17 ♗e3

17 c5 offers a chance for the freeing 17...b6.

17...d5

A somewhat late attempt to free his game, but then 17...d6 with the intention of 18...b5 would be spoilt by the paralysing 18 ♗b6.

18 cxd5 exd5 19 ♕xd5 0-0?!

What is meant as a sanctuary will soon become the black king's coffin. It is true, 19...♗e6 20 ♕c5 remains uncomfortable, but sometimes we can only choose between bad and worse.

20 ♕d2!

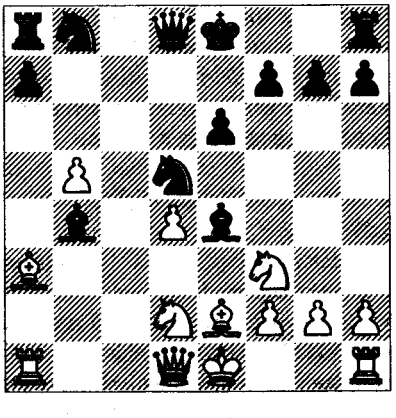
The queen moves towards h6.

20...♖d8 21 ♕c1 ♗e6?!

21...♗d6 was indispensable.

22 ♗c5 1-0

B



Gyimesi – L. Ortega
Bolzano 2000

12...♗c3

Black appears to be optimistic. He probably counted on 13 ♖c1 ♕a5, but White had a trump up his sleeve...

13 0-0!

As simple as that! The undeveloped queenside, the backward a7-pawn and especially the king stranded in the centre amply justify the exchange sacrifice. Given that 13...♗xa1 loses to 14 ♘xe4 ♘c3 15 ♕c2, the game takes on a forcing character.

13...♗xf3 14 ♗xf3

The knight stays on d2 in expectation of ♘c4-d6.

14...♗xa1

If 14...♗xd4, then White can play 15 ♖c1 or 15 ♘c4.

15 ♕xa1

15 ♘c4 has its merits too, but there is no need to hurry.

15...a6

This is no worse than other options. 15...♕d7 blocks the exit of the knight, when 16 ♘c4 f5 (16...♔d8 can be met by 17 ♘d6 or 17 ♘e5) 17 ♘d6+ ♔f8 18 ♕a2 is very good for White. On 15...f5 the knight is in time to harass the king: 16 ♘c4 ♔f7 17 ♘d6+ ♔f6 18 ♖e1 threatens 19 ♖xe6+, against which no adequate defence is at hand.

16 ♗c5 f5 17 ♘c4 ♔f7 18 ♖e1 ♘d7 19 ♘d6+ ♔g8

If 19...♔f6, then again White continues 20 ♖xe6+.

20 ♖xe6 axb5

20...♘c7 fails to 21 ♕a2.

21 ♖e8+ ♕xe8 22 ♗xd5+ 1-0

This does not differ essentially from what we saw in the preceding games. Basically, it's material against time with different nuances. Whenever we overstep the limit of time invested into winning material, we present our opponent with a golden opportunity to use that time against us in the form of counterplay. Time and material get transformed successively. What will prevail depends on particular details and other imponderables.

8 Space and Time

As we understand the value of pieces and the initiative, we learn at the same time the value of space. We learn that these values are intertwined and dependent upon one another. The positional characteristics by which we evaluate a position do not appear spontaneously. They represent the sum of the interactions between pawns and pieces. As emphasized earlier, strong features characterizing a position are a result of invested tempi and piece activity. It takes time to achieve a strong outpost on an open file or to command an important open diagonal.

A spatial advantage means that we command of a bigger share of space than the opponent. It is a result of good strategy, purposeful manoeuvring and time invested in it. It is linked essentially to pawn-structures. A pawn wedge in the enemy territory implies by itself dominance on a larger share of squares in the zone between the two armies; it restricts the opponent's options and often cramps the enemy pieces. Space is often conquered by achieving a preponderance in the centre. By limiting chances for counterplay, it is the basis for play on the wings, which further enhances the space advantage. Practical experience also tells us that, when the power in the centre is shared, a space advantage may be achieved by pawn advances, usually based on pawn-majorities or minority attacks. The side which seizes space by advancing pawns transforms it, as a rule, into an initiative or some sort of positional advantage (strong squares, dominant pieces, damaged enemy pawn-structure, etc.). The space becomes a basis for some new values in the process of metamorphosis. More space means more freedom for action, easier manoeuvring of the minor pieces and greater mobility for the major pieces. That freedom strengthens the initiative.

Space and initiative depend upon one another; they grow together and get reduced together. Seizing space often means developing an initiative. The larger the space the pieces act in, the more numerous their functions. Note that widening spatial control does not mean only broadening manoeuvring space but it also multiplies the functions of the pieces. The opposite is true if we lose space. Elements of space and time intertwine. At the crucial moment when an attack breaks through, either the initiative gets transformed back into material or it overruns the defensive line and wins at once.

Naturally, the conquered space is not in itself of value. When seizing space we often dilute the concentration of forces or leave behind potential weaknesses, offering the opponent targets for counterplay. If the conquered space is not controlled well, it may become a mine-field. It must, therefore, be measured against time and material. At the start we have to assess whether our dominance in space helps us to seize the initiative and whether the material force in the critical sector is adequate for the planned action. Larger space is a meaningful asset only as a basis for positive transformations. If these are out of reach, it becomes a liability.

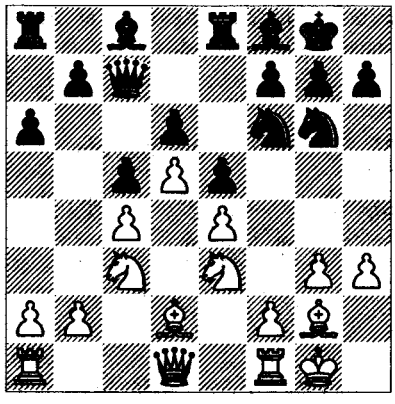
These are the basic themes we shall examine when analysing the games and positions that follow. In this chapter we shall more often turn to the champions for instruction: logical and consistent, their games treat space in an incomparably convincing manner.

(See diagram on following page)

15 a3!

This quiet move, played at the moment of transition into the middlegame, convinces us that White has used his forces in the opening more sensibly. The central blockade, supported well by minor pieces, leaves an open road to pawn advances on both wings. Against the mobile white pawn force stands a seemingly firm, but inert central pawn-structure sensitive to side-blows. Notice especially the contrast between the active white knights keeping an eye on important squares and the passively deployed black knights limited by the white pawn-structure.

W



Smyslov – Panov
Moscow Ch 1943

15...♖b8 16 b4 b6

If Black had hoped to carry out the freeing 16...b5 in time, he had to give up the idea due to the convincing 17 cxb5 cxb4 (17...axb5 does not satisfy due to 18 a4! bxa4 19 b5) 18 axb4 axb5 19 ♖a5, when the battle is transferred to the queenside, where White has a superior force. Black is, therefore, compelled to accept that White will have a clear preponderance in space.

17 ♖e1

Vacating the f1-square prepares the manoeuvre ♗f1-d3: the king's bishop moves to an ideal central location at d3, where it oversees both wings.

17...♗d7 18 ♗f1 ♕c8?!

Forcing the white king where it wants to go. This will only add to the feeling of being squeezed and lacking active ideas.

19 ♔h2 ♘e7 20 ♕f3 ♖d8 21 g4!

How simple and logical! White's spatial advantage is enhanced against the cramped black pieces.

21...♘e8 22 ♘f5

The knight finishes its long march at just the right moment. If Black exchanged it off, he would cede an unassailable central spot at e4 to the c3-knight, which he cannot afford.

22...♕c7 23 ♖ac1 ♖dc8 24 b5

White evaluates correctly that his vast spatial advantage guarantees a favourable development of events on the kingside and, therefore, closes the queenside.

24...♖a8 25 a4 a5

The ill-advised exchange on b5 would just cede White another strategic square at c4.

26 ♗d3 ♕d8 27 ♖h1 ♖c7 28 ♖cg1 ♘g6 29 g5 ♖aa7 30 h4 ♘h8

Black has been gradually outplayed and his pieces are packed like sardines on the back ranks. However, before starting the final operations, in a triumph of patience Smyslov makes a sensible decision:

31 ♔g2 g6 32 ♔f1

It is quite clear White can afford the piece; 32...gxf5 33 exf5 weakens the position of the black king too much. It means that under the circumstances White can afford to move his king out of potential danger. The blocked queenside is its rightful destination.

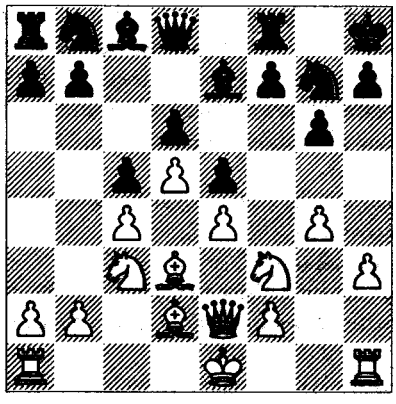
32...♗c8 33 h5 ♖ab7 34 ♖h2 ♖a7 35 ♔e1 ♖ab7 36 ♔d1 ♖a7 37 ♔c2 ♖ab7 38 ♔b3 ♖a7 39 ♕g3 ♖ab7 40 f4

Now it's time. It is curious that the first pawn will be exchanged only now, on move 40! White commands an overwhelming space advantage and breaks through.

40...exf4 41 ♗xf4 ♖a7 42 ♘d1 gxf5 43 exf5 ♘g7 44 ♘e3 h6 45 f6 1-0

The strong central blockade created the right preconditions, while the wing pawn advance enhanced White's dominance in space to the point at which no coordinated resistance could be organized. These same features characterize a number of selected positions that follow.

B



Seirawan – I. Ivanov
USA Ch (Seattle) 2002

Black's position might be quite appealing if he had time to carry out the side-blow ...b5 or

...f5, but White is always attentive to prevent these ambitious plans. Here the standard pawn advance h3+g4 has prevented an early ...f5 (if carried out, exchanges would present White with a dominant knight at e4, while a peaceful refuge on the queenside is being prepared for the white king).

11...♘d7 12 0-0-0 ♘f6 13 ♖dg1 a6

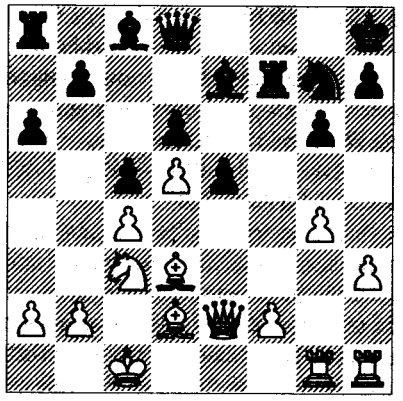
Black faces a kingside onslaught, while his counterplay on the other wing seems slow and unpromising. In such a situation 13...♘g8 is better. At least it would give sense to the earlier ...♔h8.

14 ♘g5 ♘xd5?!

Now 14...♘g8 is indispensable. It soon becomes clear why.

15 ♘xf7+ ♖xf7 16 exd5 *(D)*

B



Exchanges have led Black to an inferior pawn-structure and presented White with the powerful central e4-square. Besides, the inferior positions of the black minor pieces, especially the g7-knight, strike the eye.

16...♗g5

Understandable, since otherwise there would follow 17 ♘e4.

17 ♗e3 ♗xe3+?!

Opening the f-file can favour only White, as he is better developed. 17...♗f4 is necessary.

18 fxe3 ♗d7 19 ♖f1!

Obvious but strong. Nothing can stop White from penetrating down the open file.

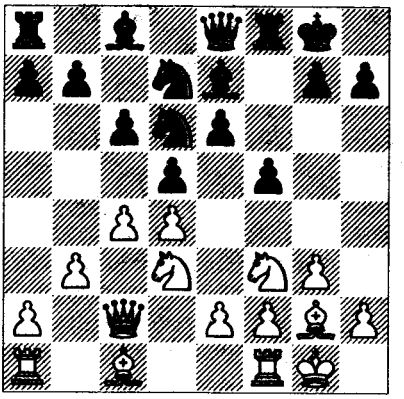
19...♖xf1+ 20 ♖xf1 ♕e7 21 ♕f3 ♘e8

Note 21...♔g8 22 ♘e4 ♘e8 would fail to stop the penetration due to 23 ♘g5.

22 ♕f7 ♕xf7 23 ♖xf7 ♖d8 24 ♘e4 ♔g8 25 ♖e7

The rook is there to stay on the seventh rank. Black has been outplayed.

B



Petrosian – Bondarevsky
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1950

In the Stonewall, Black is usually burdened with a passive queen's bishop. Sometimes he tries to bring it to life by the long manoeuvre ...♗d7-e8-h5, but the most natural way to do it is with a fianchetto.

12...b5

Bondarevsky thought he could kill two birds with one stone and instead of the modest 12...b6 he advanced the pawn two squares, intending ...bxc4 followed by the active ...♗a6. However, that was not to be. As a matter of fact, Petrosian did not need any incentive to close the centre...

13 c5 ♘f7

At e4 the knight would look nicer, but f7 is its logical place: at this stage Black was probably considering ...e5, for which he needed more support.

14 a4!

A most unpleasant move which catches Black on the wrong foot and damages his pawn-structure.

14...bxa4 15 ♖xa4 ♗f6 16 ♗b2 a6

It was time to ponder 16...e5, but Black in all probability did not like 17 dxe5 ♘fxe5 18 ♘dxe5 (or the immediate 18 ♘d4) 18...♘xe5 19 ♘d4. However, after his actual choice, the fleeting chance for the central advance was gone. In his usual boa-constrictor style, Petrosian closes the centre, judging that the space

advantage in the centre will have a beneficial effect on White's queenside initiative.

17 ♘fe5! ♘fxe5 18 dxe5 ♗e7 19 f4

Let the black pieces choke on their back ranks.

19...♖b8

Fighting for breath in such positions requires patience and precision. Starting kingside counterplay by 19...h6 at once seems to me more appropriate.

20 ♖fa1 ♖b5 21 b4 h5 22 ♗c3 h4 23 e3 ♘b8 24 ♘e1 ♖b7?!

The rook retreats in expectation of ♘f3-d4, but 24...hxg3 25 hxg3 g5 is more consistent. Bondarevsky had not foreseen White's next idea.

25 gxh4!

Petrosian was generally considered a dreary player, but it was a camouflage by which many were taken in. When the chance was offered, all of a sudden he would jump on his victim in a brilliant flash of imagination.

25...♗xh4 26 ♘f3 ♗d8 27 h4 ♕h5 28 ♗e1

Having dealt with the opponent's counterplay on the kingside by a very determined hand, White is now ready to exploit his huge spatial advantage.

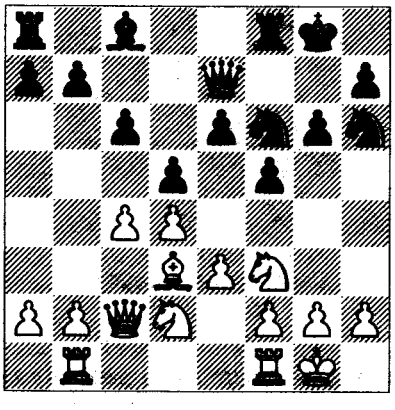
28...♗d7?!

28...g6 is better.

29 ♕f2 ♔f7 30 ♗f1 ♖h8 31 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 32 ♖xa6

White's space advantage has been transformed into a decisive material plus.

W



Capablanca – Treybal
Karlsbad 1929

After some questionable decisions Black had made in the opening, White had no doubts about his next steps...

12 ♘e5 ♘f7 13 f4!

In view of the potential queenside attack, blocking the centre is fully justified.

13...♗d7

Exchanges would be to Black's detriment. For instance: 13...♘xe5 14 fxe5 ♘e4 15 ♗xe4 fxe4 (or 15...dxe4 16 c5) 16 ♖xf8+ followed by 17 ♖f1.

14 ♘df3 ♖fd8

14...a5 is somewhat better, but Black decided his best chance was passive waiting.

15 b4

Typical of the positions characterized by a blocked centre: advancing pawns seize space and initiative.

15...♗e8 16 ♖fc1 a6 17 ♕f2

With a large space advantage, White is in no hurry to simplify the position. He decides to take a look at the position from the other side; he has ideas of playing ♕h4.

17...♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♘d7 19 ♘f3

A little lesson in positional judgement: in a cramped position like this exchanges would work to Black's favour.

19...♖dc8 20 c5 ♘f6 21 a4 ♘g4 22 ♕e1 ♘h6 23 h3 ♘f7 24 g4

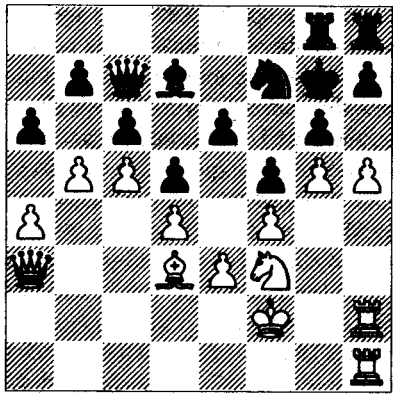
The stable centre enables White to create play on both wings. Black will be stifled.

24...♗d7 25 ♖c2 ♔h8 26 ♖g2 ♖g8 27 g5

Two paths of breakthrough have been left – in the footsteps of h5 and b5.

27...♕d8 28 h4 ♔g7 29 h5 ♖h8 30 ♖h2 ♕c7 31 ♕c3 ♕d8 32 ♔f2 ♕c7 33 ♖bh1 ♖ag8 34 ♕a1 ♖b8 35 ♕a3 ♖bg8 36 b5! *(D)*

B



The time has come: White clears the road at the proper moment.

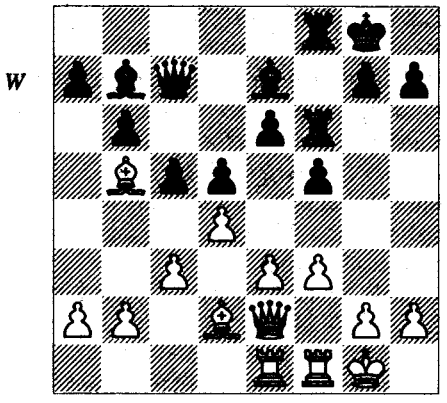
36...axb5 37 h6+ ♔f8 38 axb5 ♔e7 39 b6

Although a very narrow path for penetration has been left, Black cannot defend it because he lacks the necessary manoeuvring space. The end is slow but inevitable.

39...♕b8 40 ♖a1 ♖c8 41 ♕b4 ♖hd8 42 ♖a7 ♔f8 43 ♖h1 ♗e8 44 ♖ha1 ♔g8 45 ♖1a4 ♔f8 46 ♕a3 ♔g8 47 ♔g3 ♗d7 48 ♔h4 ♔h8 49 ♕a1 ♔g8 50 ♔g3 ♔f8 51 ♔g2 ♗e8 52 ♘d2 ♗d7 53 ♘b3 ♖e8

53...♗e8 does not help due to 54 ♘a5 ♖d7 55 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 56 ♖a8.

54 ♘a5 ♘d8 55 ♗a6! bxa6 56 ♖xd7 ♖e7 57 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 58 ♘xc6 1-0



Kupchik – Capablanca
Lake Hopatcong 1926

After hesitant play in the opening, White now decided to block the centre:

17 f4

By doing so he protects his king against pressure and probably had illusions he could carry out g4 and seize the initiative on the kingside. However, this move gives up White's chances of opening the centre. The consequence is that he has surrendered the queenside to Black, and Capablanca immediately took advantage of this.

17...c4!

The preconditions for a full-scale pawn advance have been created.

18 ♔h1 ♗d6 19 ♖f3

Note that 19 g4 would be met by 19...fxg4 20 ♕xg4 e5!.

19...h5 20 ♖ef1 ♖h6!

The queenside attack must wait; the priority for the moment is to discourage the opponent's kingside activity. If White tries to carry out g4 at all costs, after ...g6 the other rook could move to the h-file.

21 ♗e1 g6 22 ♗h4 ♔f7

The king is safe on f7, while the first rank has been vacated for the efficient coordination of the rooks.

23 ♕e1 a6 24 ♗a4 b5 25 ♗d1 ♗c6 26 ♖h3?! a5 27 ♗g5 ♖hh8 28 ♕h4 b4

While White entangled himself in a useless show of feigned activity on the kingside, the long-awaited queenside counterplay catches him unprepared.

29 ♕e1

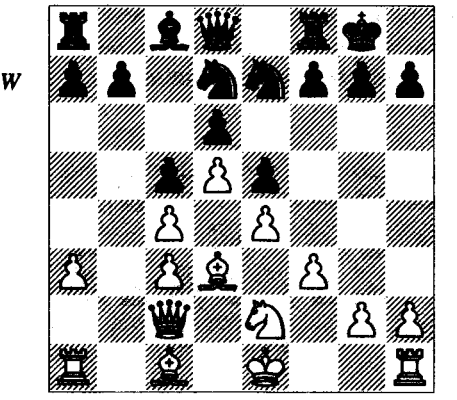
Seeing that 29 ♗f6 would be parried by 29...♗e7, White has nothing better than to sound a retreat.

29...♖b8 30 ♖hf3 a4 31 ♖3f2 a3

The large space advantage has turned into a well-supported pawn avalanche that cannot be stopped.

32 b3 cxb3 33 ♗xb3 ♗b5 34 ♖g1 ♕xc3 35 ♕xc3 bxc3 36 ♖c2 ♖hc8 37 ♗h4 ♗d3 38 ♖cc1 ♖xb3 39 axb3 a2 0-1

Nothing can be done against 40...♗b1.



Capablanca – Ragozin
Moscow 1935

The blocked centre and a generally closed position can hardly console Black, who will be exposed to slow, relentless pressure from the advancing kingside pawns. Besides, there is the

semi-open b-file which can be used as an additional route of attack. All we can conclude for the time being is that Black can expect no fun in the coming middlegame.

12 h4 ♘b6 13 g4 f6?!

Scared by the advance, the king decides to flee to the other wing, which at the moment seems to be a more peaceful place to stay in. In his later comments Ragozin was more courageous and preferred 13...♗d7.

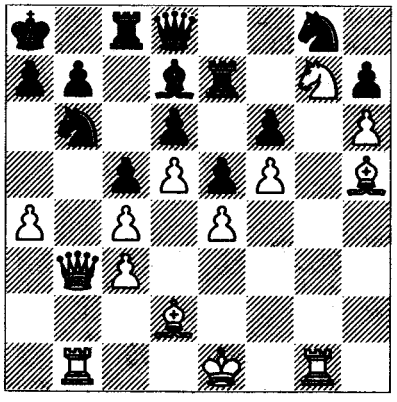
14 ♘g3 ♔f7 15 g5 ♘g8 16 f4 ♔e8 17 f5 ♕e7 18 ♕g2 ♔d8 19 ♘h5 ♔c7 20 gxf6 gxf6 21 ♘g7! ♗d7 22 h5 ♖ac8 23 h6 ♔b8

Black has carried out his evacuation successfully, but at a price. His living space has been reduced to the back ranks, while his opponent has kept the b- and g-files as free routes of action. Besides, the distant knight on g7 can use the strong e6-square at will. These are worrying signs Black will have to live with.

24 ♖g1 ♖f7 25 ♖b1 ♕f8 26 ♗e2 ♔a8 27 ♗h5 ♖e7 28 ♕a2 ♕d8 29 ♗d2 ♘a4 30 ♕b3 ♘b6

The exchange of queens at b6 would not relieve Black's difficulties and 30...♖b8 31 ♘e6 is also troublesome.

31 a4! *(D)*



The first sign that the king will not enjoy a peaceful refuge at a8. The pawn's advance is disquieting, but it cannot be stopped.

31...♖b8

31...♗xa4 fails to 32 ♕a2 ♗d7 (32...♕d7 loses to 33 ♖xb6 axb6 34 ♗d1) 33 ♘e6 ♗xe6 34 fxe6, when things get desperate for Black.

32 a5 ♘c8

After 32...♘a4, 33 ♘e6 finds no response.

33 ♕a2 ♕f8 34 ♗e3 b6 35 a6!

If Black hoped for relief through exchanges, he must have been disappointed. Capablanca keeps the lid on the position, choking the black pieces.

35...♕d8 36 ♔d2 ♕f8 37 ♖b2 ♕d8 38 ♕b1 b5

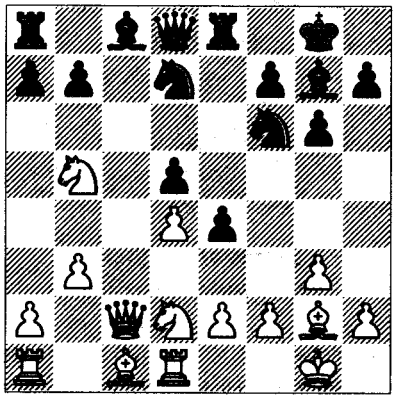
At last some breathing space, but far from enough. Unfortunately, waiting by 38...♕f8 39 ♕f1 ♕d8 would finish badly after the simple 40 ♘e6 ♗xe6 41 fxe6.

39 cxb5 ♘b6 40 ♕a2 c4 41 ♕a3 ♕c7 42 ♔c1 ♖f8 43 ♖bg2 ♕b8 44 ♕b4 ♖d8 45 ♖g3 ♖f8 46 ♘e6

Black has no good answer to this long-awaited intrusion. White threatens 47 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 48 ♘c7+, and 46...♖c8 loses to 47 ♗xb6 axb6 48 a7.

46...♗xe6 47 dxe6 ♖c7 48 ♕xd6 ♘e7 49 ♖d1 1-0

Like Treybal in the above game, Ragozin was strangled.



Stoltz – Kotov
Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952

Black's decision to block the centre seemed risky; White has just played 13 ♘c3-b5, apparently refuting Black's play. However, Kotov had examined the position deeper...

13...♖e6! 14 ♕c7 ♕e8 15 ♘d6 ♕f8 16 ♗a3 ♘e8!

The point of a brilliant defence. Exchanges start to work in Black's favour.

17 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♘f1 ♖c6 19 ♕f4 ♘f8 20 ♕d2 ♗d7 21 ♖ac1 ♘e6 22 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 23 e3 f5

At the end of a long series of more or less forcing moves the fruits of the blockade prove beneficial to Black: an unassailable basis has been constructed for the kingside spatial dominance and a strong initiative.

24 ♖c1 g5 25 ♕d1 ♕g6 26 ♖c2 f4

Deprived of manoeuvring space, the defence of the white king is obviously suspect in face of the growing attack.

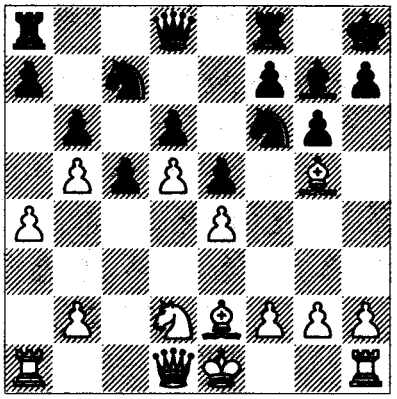
27 ♗h3 ♗d7 28 ♔h1 h5 29 gxf4 gxf4 30 f3 exf3 31 ♖f2 ♕e4 32 exf4 ♘xf4! 33 ♗xd7 ♘d3 34 ♕d2 ♘xf2+ 35 ♕xf2 ♗xd4

Black's initiative has reaped its full rewards.

36 ♗e6+

Kotov now demonstrated 36...♔h7 37 ♗f5+ ♕xf5 38 ♕xd4 f2, etc., winning cleanly.

W



Petrosian – Pilnik
Amsterdam Ct 1956

Although we are still in the early opening phase and in spite of its closed character, some *faux pas* by Black have left their imprint.

13 b4!

As a result of this pawn advance three scenarios are possible:

a) bxc5 dxc5 will create a protected passed pawn on the d-file;

b) bxc5 bxc5 will create a pawn-majority on the queenside;

c) Black avoids both these possibilities by capturing on b4, but that would surrender the open c-file.

13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 0-0 ♖fd8

It's hard to imagine active counterplay on the kingside and so Black grudgingly accepts the passive role imposed by his inferior pawn-structure.

16 ♘c4

Since by Black's error the c4-square was vacated, it was clear that this knight will play an important role in the middlegame.

16...♗f8 17 g3 cxb4

More patience is needed in such a difficult defence. 17...h5 is better.

18 ♕b3 ♔g7?!

Probably prompted by wishful thinking that 19 ♕xb4 ♘e6 will free him. Again 18...h5 is correct.

19 ♖fc1

The open file beckons.

19...h5 20 ♘e3 ♘e8 21 ♕xb4 ♖dc8 22 ♖c6 ♕d8

22...♖xc6 23 bxc6 ♘c7 stops the attack only for a moment. 24 a5 b5 25 a6 is not very promising for Black.

23 ♖ac1 ♘f6 24 ♗f1!

The intended ...♘d7-c5 must be prevented.

24...♖cb8 25 ♗h3 a6 26 ♖e1

Laying siege to the b6-pawn. White threatens ♘c4 and ♕b3-e3.

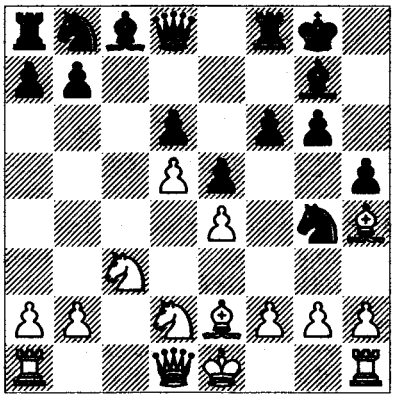
26...axb5 27 axb5 ♘h7 28 ♘c4 ♖a2 29 ♗g2 ♕f6 30 ♖f1 ♘g5 31 ♕b3

The temporary threats have been parried and Black is definitely losing the b6-pawn.

31...♖ba8 32 h4 ♘h7 33 ♖xb6 ♖a1 34 ♖c6 ♖8a2 35 ♕e3

Now only minor technical problems stand between White and victory.

B



Gelfand – Shirov
Istanbul OL 2000

The initial phase of the game has brought about some similarities of the pawn-structure to that above, with similar difficulties in prospect. While Black's kingside advance is stuck with no clear plan for further activity, White turns his attention to the queenside. The king's knight moves towards c4 and the king's bishop will transfer to f2 soon. It is already apparent that Black's queenside will come under pressure.

12...♘a6 13 ♘c4 ♘h6 14 f3 ♘f7

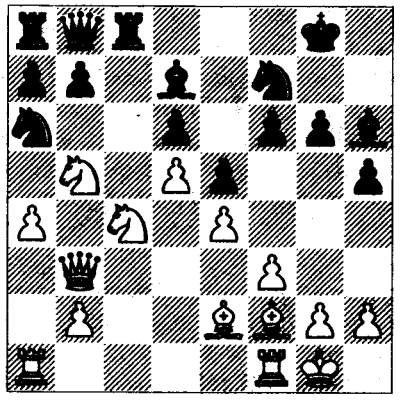
From Shirov one would expect the more active 14...g5 15 ♗f2 f5, but he continues to dig defensive trenches.

15 0-0 ♗d7 16 a4

Having landed his king's knight on a magnificent square, White keeps the other light square for his queen's knight. As compensation, for the time being Black controls the dark squares b4 and c5, but he can't make much use of them. As soon as the knight sits on c5 it will be chased away by b4 and White's grip on the queenside will be emphasized. Besides, the prepared ♗f2 will accentuate the pressure.

16...♕b8 17 ♘b5 ♖c8 18 ♗f2 ♗h6 19 ♕b3! *(D)*

B



White threatens the unpleasant ♕a3, which will enhance the pressure on the vulnerable point d6 and make b4 possible, squeezing Black further.

19...♘c5 20 ♕a3 a6?

20...b6 was perhaps not to Shirov's liking, but it was indispensable. In trying to clarify the situation, Shirov weakens yet another important square – b6 – and the reaction comes at once...

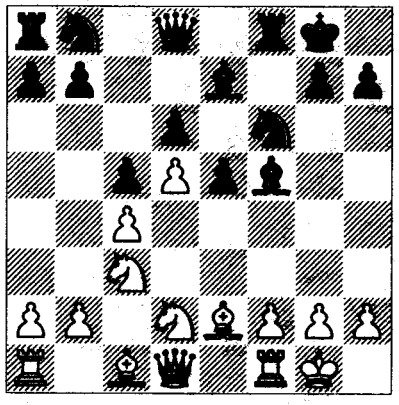
21 ♘bxd6! ♘xd6 22 ♘b6!

The temporary piece sacrifice will reap a good harvest.

22...♗f8 23 b4 ♘cxe4 24 fxe4 ♗e8 25 ♕f3 ♗e7 26 ♘xa8 ♕xa8 27 ♗c5

From an early stage in the middlegame Black was in a hopeless position. Gelfand was offered a couple of strong strategic squares on a plate and he knew what to do with them. Black's game is now beyond hope.

W



Euwe – Milić
Beverwijk 1958

Black has committed some strategic errors in trying to undermine the blockade. White's next move hits him with full force.

11 f4! exf4

Black has no choice.

12 ♖xf4 ♗g6 13 ♘f3 ♘fd7

This is forced due to the threat of 14 ♘g5, but it hampers Black's natural development.

14 ♗d3 ♖xf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘f8 16 ♕e2 ♗xd3 17 ♕xd3 ♘g6 18 ♗g3 ♘d7 19 ♕f5!

White's lead in development and spatial advantage grant him a strong initiative. All the white pieces move into optimal positions. Hidden behind the apparent pressure on e6 are the imminent threats on the open f-file.

19...♘df8

19...♘gf8 is preferable.

20 ♘e4 h6 21 ♖f1 b5

Black does what he can against the growing pressure on his king.

22 cxb5 a6 23 bxa6 ♖xa6 24 ♘fd2!

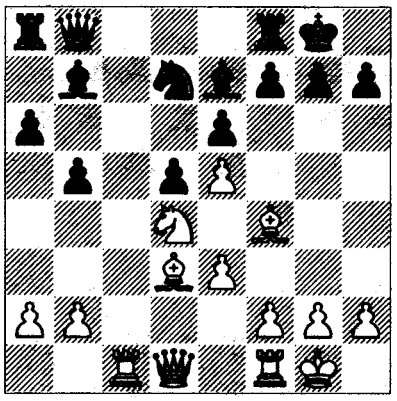
By giving back material, White accelerates his play.

24...♖xa2 25 ♘c4 ♖a6 26 ♕f7+ ♔h7

Or 26...♔h8 27 h4.

27 ♗xd6!

White's huge spatial advantage combined with his strong kingside initiative have reached the level at which they get transformed into material. Given that 27...♗xd6 loses to 28 ♘f6+, the rest is of no interest.



B

Euwe – Bogoljubow
Utrecht (6) 1928/9

By moving the knight to d4, White has strengthened his power in the centre. Owing to that power in the centre, the position of the black king already looks sensitive.

15...g6

Preventing ♕h5 was apparently the most energetic manner to protect the king and continue pressing on the e5-pawn. However, such moves usually expose the king's position to pawn attacks by f5 or h5 and, therefore, vacating the f8-square for the knight's retreat came into consideration.

16 ♗h6 ♖c8?!

Keeping material equilibrium is not always the best policy, especially when we have to choose between waiting and doing something. In my opinion 16...♘xe5 is preferable.

17 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 18 f4 ♘c5 19 g4

Relying on his strong position in the centre, White seizes space and launches an attack.

19...♘xd3?

The beginning of an erroneous plan. Black believes he can offset White's initiative by the counterplay on the c-file, but, judging from the course of events, the kingside threat is ominous and cannot be underrated. 19...f6!?, therefore, was called for.

20 ♕xd3 ♕c4 21 ♕d2 ♗b4

On the tactical level notice that there is no time for 21...♕xa2, because 22 f5 is hanging in the air. On the strategic level Black's difficulties arise from the fact that various endgames favour White, because the centralized knight is superior to the hemmed-in light-squared bishop.

22 ♕f2 ♕d3 23 f5 ♕e4 24 ♕g3

24 h3 would be met by 24...exf5 25 gxf5 ♗f8!, warding off all the threats.

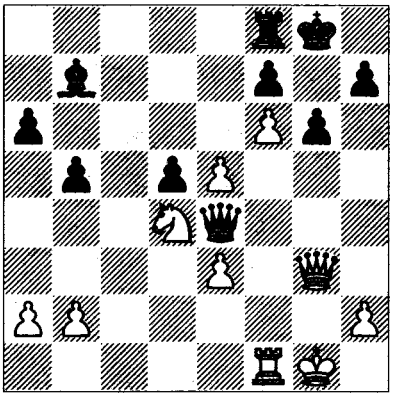
The text-move keeps the tension, and renews the threats.

24...exf5

There is no time for 24...♗c5 due to 25 fxe6 fxe6 26 ♘xe6, and 24...♗c8 is too slow due to 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 h3 ♖a7 27 ♕f2.

25 gxf5 ♗f8

25...♗c8 is insufficient because of 26 e6 fxe6 27 ♕c7.



B

26 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 27 f6! *(D)*

This bone in Black's throat creates a lasting mating threat, which can be averted only by the exchange of queens. However, that leads to a miserable endgame.

27...h5

Other moves are to no avail either: 27...h6 28 e6 fxe6 29 ♕c7 ♕g4+ 30 ♔h1 ♕e4+ 31 ♖f3; 27...♖e8 28 e6 or 27...♗c8 28 ♕g5 (28 ♕f4 is also good enough) 28...♔h8 29 ♖c1.

28 ♕g5 ♕g4+

28...♔h7 does not work due to 29 ♘f5.

29 ♕xg4 hxg4 30 e6!

The final elegant point.

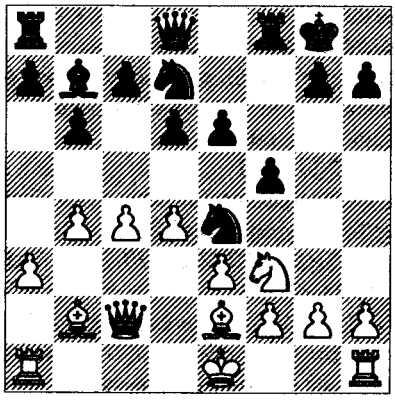
30...♔h7

30...fxe6 loses to 31 ♘xe6 ♖f7 32 ♘d8 ♖d7 33 f7+.

31 e7 ♖e8 32 ♖c1 ♔h6 33 ♘e6 1-0

When centralized pieces make part of the blocked centre, such pieces by their very position on the board emanate power which sometimes explodes into a devastating attack.

B



Korchnoi – Simagin
USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1960

While White was seizing space on the queenside, Black conquered the strong central e4-square and centralized on it a dominant knight. In harmony with the fianchettoed bishop, it creates chances for kingside counterplay.

12...♘g5

An interesting tactical solution at a sensitive moment before White has castled. It prevents White from castling kingside and, I feel, tempts him to castle queenside, which does not seem quite logical either; after 13 0-0-0 ♘e4 14 ♗d3 ♕e7 it will be difficult to ward off Black's attack.

13 c5?!

Perhaps consistent with the general plan, but ceding a powerful central position to the b7-bishop is hardly advisable. White should admit he has no advantage and retreat cautiously by 13 ♕d1.

13...♗e4 14 ♕c3?!

The queen is exposed here and again 14 ♕d1 is better, but White is reluctant to admit he threw away the initial advantage.

14...♗d5 15 e6

Nothing can be earned on the open c-file. Convinced that he can hold on the kingside, White sticks to his plan.

15...♘e4 16 ♕c1 ♘df6 17 0-0 ♕e8 18 b5 ♕h5

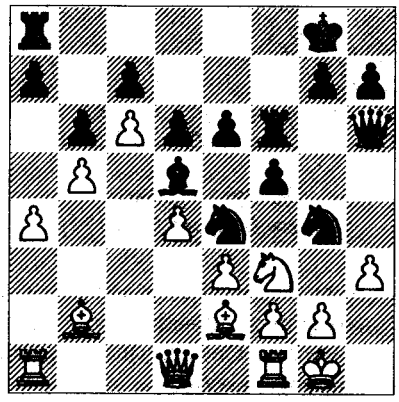
Having obtained complete dominance on the central squares, Black has moved his queen to an attacking position. The situation is obviously getting critical.

19 ♕d1 ♕h6 20 a4?

Korchnoi's sense of security has never been high. He continues to believe that his king is safe. Otherwise he would have sought a necessary prophylactic move like 20 ♘d2.

20...♘g4 21 h3 ♖f6! *(D)*

W



The knife under the chin.

22 hxg4

The sacrifice must be accepted. 22 ♘d2 and 22 ♘h2 both obviously lose to 22...♘xe3, while 22 ♘e1 is struck by 22...♘gxf2 23 ♖xf2 ♕xe3 24 ♘d3 ♖g6. 22 ♗c1 might appear more tenacious, but after 22...♖g6 23 ♕e1 ♘gxf2 24 ♖xf2 ♕xh3 the defence is blown to pieces.

22...fxg4 23 ♘h2

Or 23 ♘d2 g3.

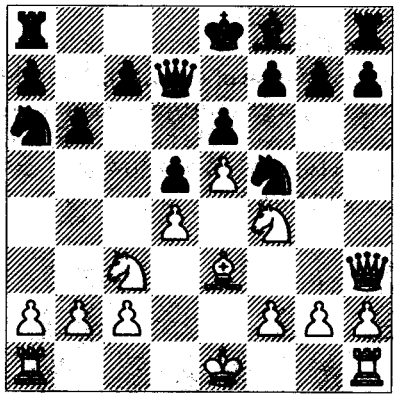
23...♘xf2 24 ♖xf2 g3 25 ♘g4

If 25 ♘f3 ♕xe3 26 ♕e1, then 26...♖h6!, etc.

25...gxf2+ 26 ♘xf2 ♕xe3 27 ♕e1 ♖af8 28 ♗f3 ♖xf3 29 gxf3 ♕xf3 30 ♔f1 ♗c4+ 31 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 32 ♔h1 ♗d5+ 33 ♘e4 ♖f1+ 0-1

The central blockade strengthened by the concentrated might of centralized pieces is a source of power which often gets transformed into a devastating attack. Another common means of spatial advantage based on the strength

in the centre is a central pawn-chain, whose wedge, even when severed from its base and not so firm, restricts the opponent's development and counterplay. Rarer in master practice than the wedge at e5, the advanced d-pawn wins space and protects the freedom of manoeuvre behind. This is what tournament practice has to say about these two formations:



Simagin – Liskov
Moscow Ch semi-final 1957

After some inconsistencies and loss of time, Black entered this position threatening ...c5 and hoping for the best. However, the struggle took a not so desirable direction.

11 g4! ♘xe3 12 fxe3 ♗b4?!

Confusing his priorities and neglecting the defensive measures against the obvious and most unpleasant ♘h5, for the second time in the game Black moves his king's bishop to b4. Now that the forced exchange strengthens the white pawn-centre, he hoped to damage the pawn-structure at c3 or to force the passive 13 ♘e2. However, none of it proved right. In spite of the resulting hole on f6, 12...g6 was a better choice.

13 0-0 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♘b8?!

If Black had flirted with the idea of queenside castling, he must have given it up because after 14...0-0-0 15 a4 ♘b8 16 a5 ♘c6 17 axb6 cxb6 he did not feel secure, but in comparison with the course of the game that seems to be a lesser evil.

15 ♘h5

White's lead in development enhanced by the spatial advantage yields a strong initiative. The combined pressure from the dominant knight and the rook on the semi-open file begin to tell at once.

15...♖g8

The idea was to meet the doubling of rooks on the f-file and to defend the backward f7-pawn by ...♘c6-d8, after which ...♖c8 followed by ...c5 would make possible the desired counterplay. After 16 ♖f2 ♘c6 17 ♖af1 ♘d8 that would work, but White had a trump-card up his sleeve...

16 ♖f6!

The difference is that 16...♘c6 would be punished by 17 ♖h6!, when Black loses material. Black tries to wriggle out in another way, but without success:

16...♕e7 17 ♖af1

The rook remains taboo, due to 17...gxf6 18 ♘xf6+ ♔f8 19 ♕h6+ ♖g7 20 ♘xh7+, etc.

17...♘d7 18 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 19 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 20 ♘f4 ♘f8 21 c4!

Before the black rooks can achieve the necessary degree of coordination, the pawn sacrifice opens the position for the queen.

21...dxc4

21...c6 does not help because of 22 cxd5 cxd5 23 c4 dxc4 24 ♕f3.

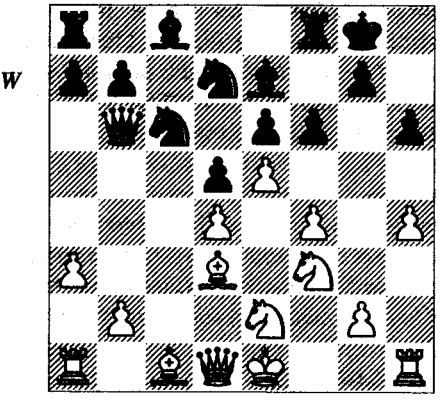
22 ♕f3 ♖d8 23 d5 exd5?!

23...♔e7 puts up tougher resistance.

24 ♘h3+! ♔e8 25 ♘g5 ♖d7 26 e6 ♘xe6

Or 26...♖e7 27 ♕f7+.

27 ♘xe6 ♔e7 28 ♕f5 ♔d6 29 ♘f4 c6 30 ♕e6+ 1-0



Spassky – Yusupov
Belfort 1988

Black failed to meet the active 9 h4 properly and several moves later found himself faced with unpleasant decisions. He is squeezed by the strong pawn wedge, his queenside is still undeveloped, while his pressure on White's pawn-centre is rather feeble.

13 b4

The weakened position of the black king is White's primary interest, but before taking any steps in that direction, he prevents counterplay by seizing space on the queenside.

13...♔h8 14 ♗b1! f5

By threatening 15 ♕d3 f5 16 g4 White calls into question the earlier ...f6 and forces Black to block the position.

15 ♗d3

In a blocked position of this kind, losing a tempo in general means little, and here it had a positive effect. The position of the central wedge has been secured and White's vast spatial advantage on both wings emphasized.

15...♕d8 16 h5 ♘b6 17 ♔f2 ♗d7 18 ♕g1!

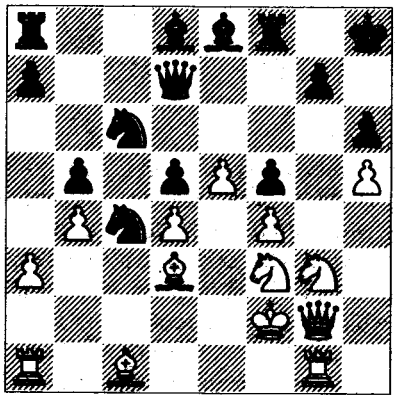
The centre of operations is moved to the kingside; g4 is imminent.

18...♘c4 19 g4 b5 20 gxf5 exf5 21 ♕g6 ♗e8?

Against the growing pressure on the backward g7-pawn (White was threatening ♖g1), 21...♕e8 is indispensable, leaving the bishop protecting the f5-pawn. The reason will be clear soon.

22 ♕g2 ♕d7 23 ♖g1 ♗d8 24 ♘g3 *(D)*

B

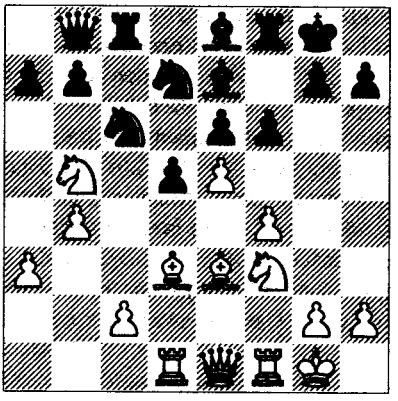


Black's defence is not holding. He now improvised a counter-attack:

24...♘xd4 25 ♘xd4 ♗b6 26 ♗e3 ♘xe5 27 ♗xf5

White is firmly on top.

W



Ivanchuk – Morozevich
Amsterdam 1996

Cramped on the back ranks, Black obviously put his best hopes in ...f6, meant to undermine the pawn wedge, to get some breathing space and counterplay, but he was a step too late.

17 ♕h4 f5

At the critical moment the queen's sally prevented Black's intentions. Given that 17...h6 hardly comes into consideration due to the quiet 18 ♕h3, Black felt forced to close the b1-h7 diagonal. However, the ugly 17...g6, in spite of its appearance, comes into consideration.

18 ♕h3

Ivanchuk notes that 18 ♗xa7 leads to a clear advantage, but over the board 18...♗xh4 19 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 20 ♘xh4 g5 may cause some uneasiness. In view of the coming g4, the chosen move seems to me consistent and logical. Possessing such a strong centre and commanding a lot of space, White can afford a slower approach.

18...♘b6

18...a6 19 ♘bd4 would just increase the probability of a successful knight sacrifice on e6 or f5.

19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 g4!

The exchange on b6 was favourable in itself, but it also gained a precious moment to carry out this advance which gives sense to the queen manoeuvre on the h-file.

20...g6 21 gxf5 exf5

21...gxf5 22 ♔h1 ♔h8 23 ♖g1 increases White's attacking options: he threatens not only ♖g3, ♖dg1 followed by ♕xh7+, mating, but also ♘d6.

22 ♖f2 ♘d8 23 ♘bd4 ♔h8

Attempts to establish a blockader on e6 fail. 23...♗f7 does not work because of 24 ♘xf5, while 23...♗d7 24 ♖g2 threatens the same.

24 ♖g2 ♖c3 25 ♘h4 ♘c6

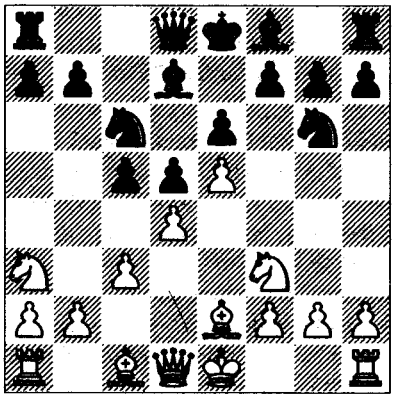
Capturing on h4 weakens the dark squares irremediably, while 25...♖g8 26 ♘hxf5 gxf5 27 ♘xf5 shatters the pawn shield around the king.

26 ♘e6 ♖g8 27 ♘xf5 ♕c8 28 ♖g3!

The threat of 29 ♕xh7+ is decisive.

White's powerful grip on the centre was transformed into an initiative and an attack.

W



Grishchuk – Graf
Bled OL 2002

Against this type of blockade in the Advance French, Black usually moves his king's knight to f5, exerting pressure on the base of the pawn-chain. The purpose of the manoeuvre ...♘ge7-g6 might be to create pressure on the e5-pawn, if the knight were not so exposed to the following natural advance of the h-pawn, which makes the whole idea somewhat doubtful.

8 h4 cxd4 9 cxd4 ♗xa3 10 bxa3 h6

Otherwise the pawn marches to h6, creating a complex of weak dark squares.

11 h5 ♘ge7 12 0-0 ♘a5

Considering the pressure exerted by the bishop-pair on the diagonals, castling kingside looks like inviting trouble, while returning to 12...♘f5 is at the very least inconsistent.

13 ♖b1 ♗c6?!

13...b6 would cement the queenside in its inactivity, but the bishop stands better on d7, as it generally does in this type of position in which sooner or later Black may expect White to advance his f-pawn. There remains 13...♕c7, which has an additional plus in that it leaves the option of castling queenside.

14 ♗d3

The light-squared bishop moves to its natural position, whence it supports the kingside play. No less important, the move opens the road for ♕g4 as soon as the f3-knight can be moved to either e1 or h4.

14...♘c4

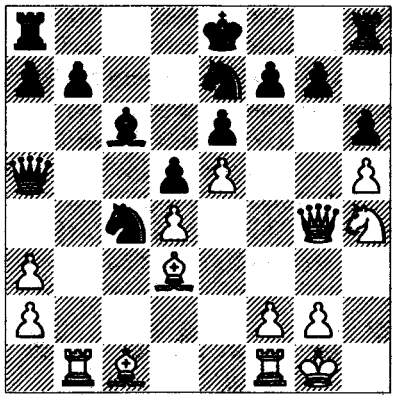
White is ready to take full use of the space conquered by the advance of the h-pawn with 15 ♘h4 and 16 ♕g4. 14...♘c8 would prevent that sequence only temporarily. 15 ♘e1 opens the way, but, considering that the knight is more powerful on h4, White can afford 15 g3 too.

15 ♘h4

Obvious but strong. The h-pawn created the right preconditions for a kingside initiative based around ♕g4 and an f-pawn advance.

15...♕a5 16 ♕g4 *(D)*

B



16...♔d7

For the time being this works. After 17 ♕xg7 ♖ag8, 18 ♕xf7 ♖f8 leads to a repetition of moves, while 18 ♕f6 ♕c3 allows Black counterplay. Anyway, other options were not so attractive. 16...♘xa3 17 ♖b3 grabs an insignificant pawn while chasing the rook where it ought to go. 16...♘d2 17 ♗xd2 ♕xd2 18 ♖bd1 ♕g5 protects the kingside pawns, but after 19 ♕h3 Black remains inferior.

17 ♖b4!?

Excluding ...♘d2 or at some point ...♕c3.

17...♖ag8

White would meet 17...♘xa3 by 18 ♗d2.

18 f4

Finally the standard pawn breakthrough has been prepared and we start to feel that the king is not so safe on d7 as it looked a couple of moves back.

18...f5 19 exf6 gxf6 20 ♕e2

White threatens 21 ♖e1.

20...♘d6 21 f5

Otherwise Black plays ...f5, closing the position to the white bishops.

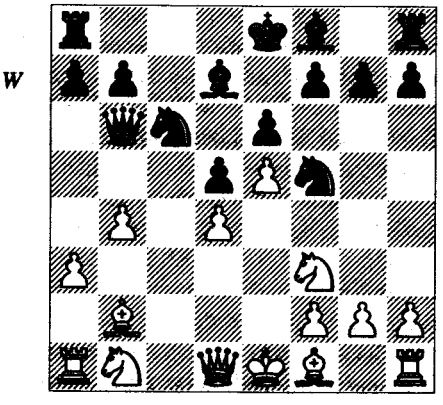
21...exf5

Black is hoping for relief through simplification. However, 21...♘e4 22 fxe6+ ♔xe6 23 ♘g6 will open the position to White's favour; for example, 23...♖h7 24 ♗xe4 dxe4 25 d5+ or 23...♘xg6 24 hxg6, when 24...♖xg6 25 ♕h5 and 24...h5 25 ♕f3 favour White.

22 ♘xf5 ♘exf5 23 ♗xf5+ ♘xf5 24 ♖xf5 ♕d8 25 ♖b3

In spite of the material balance, apparent simplicity and opposite-coloured bishops, White has kept a clear advantage. His pieces are much better posted and his pawn-structure is superior. He won elegantly:

25...♖h7 26 ♕f3 ♔c8 27 ♖xf6 ♖e8 28 ♖xc6+! bxc6 29 ♕g4+ ♕d7 30 ♕g3 ♔d8 31 ♗xh6! ♖xh6 32 ♖b8+ ♔e7 33 ♕g7+ ♔d6 34 ♕xh6+ 1-0



Grishchuk – Radjabov
Wijk aan Zee 2003

Compared to some similar positions in the book, this one may seem to differ in unimportant nuances, but that would be a superficial judgement. It is exactly the nuances that determine its essence. By playing 9...♗d7, Black had intentionally provoked the following sequence. Let us see with what results.

10 g4 ♘fe7 11 ♘c3 ♘a5

11...h5 would alleviate the pressure on the kingside, but it would be inadmissible to allow 12 ♘a4, which decisively grabs space on the queenside.

12 ♘d2 ♖c8 13 ♖c1 ♘g6 14 h4 ♗e7 15 g5!?

15 h5 is definitely less convincing. After 15...♘h4 we sense that White has grabbed more space than he can control.

15...h6

This undermining move is the critical response.

16 gxh6 ♖xh6

In case of 16...gxh6, White's options widen. Apart from the game continuation, there is 17 ♕g4, and also the incisive 17 ♗d3.

17 h5 ♘h4 18 ♕g4

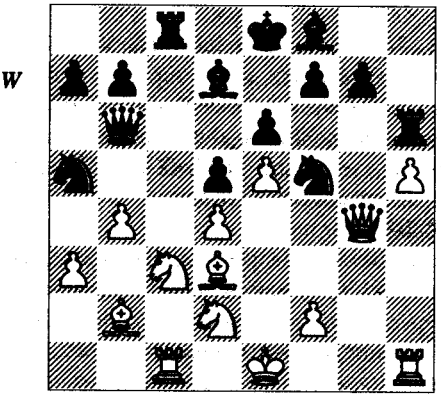
This makes the difference in comparison with 15 h5. The g4-square has been vacated for the queen and the kingside space advantage yields positive pressure.

18...♘f5 19 ♗d3

White indirectly protects the d4-pawn.

19...♗f8 *(D)*

19...♕xd4 obviously does not work, but 19...♘xd4 is possible at the cost of the g7-pawn. However, after 20 ♕xg7 ♗f8 21 ♕g8 Black's kingside is rather clumsy. White threatens to increase his initiative with the simple 22 ♘e2, and we can imagine that ♗c1 might soon lead to catastrophe.



20 ♘e2

The apparently attractive 20 ♗xf5 exf5 21 ♕f3 ♗e6 22 ♘xd5 is not wholly clear because

22...♖xc1+ 23 ♗xc1 ♕d8 puts pressure on the exposed pawn-centre; for example, 24 ♘f4 (worse is 24 ♘c3 ♘c6 25 d5 ♘xe5 26 ♕e2 ♗xd5) 24...♘c6 25 d5 ♘d4 26 ♕g2 ♕c7 with a sharp position.

20...♘c4?!

Instead of this ambitious move, the modest 20...♘c6 is more appropriate.

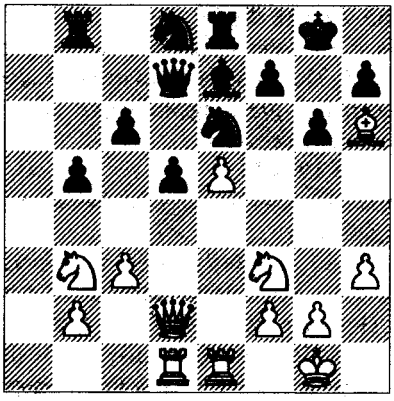
21 ♘xc4 dxc4 22 ♗xf5 exf5 23 ♕g2

At the end of the complications White's spatial advantage on both wings has been transformed into a mobile central pawn unit.

23...a5 24 ♗c3 axb4 25 axb4 ♖a8 26 d5 ♖a2 27 ♔f1! ♕a6 28 ♖e1

The scene is set for the decisive breakthrough with e6. Black has been outplayed.

W



Gofshtein – V. Mikhalevski
Israeli Ch (Tel Aviv) 2002

The e5-pawn this time has no pawn basis to support it firmly, but it is supported well by pieces and it helps to create that unmistakable feeling that something is rotten in the complex of dark squares around the black king. The next move will enhance this feeling.

23 ♘h2!

Black's queenside play has been stymied, and now White threatens ♘g4, strengthening his grip on the kingside and seizing a large space advantage. Black's reply is practically forced.

23...f5

Now the existing weaknesses are transformed into new ones.

24 exf6 ♗xf6 25 ♘g4 ♗h8 26 ♖e2

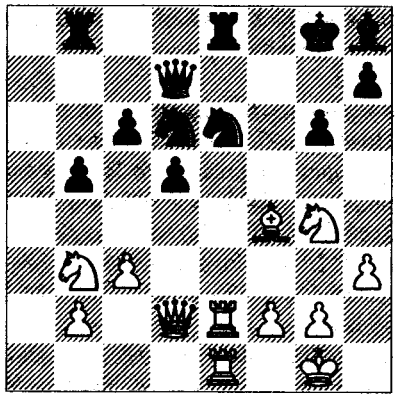
White's pressure on the open file emphasizes the sensitive dark squares from c5 to h6.

26...♘f7 27 ♖de1 ♘d6?

Where is this going? This knight is holding the position together and must stay put.

28 ♗f4! *(D)*

B



Vacating the h6-square for the knight proves terminal. All of a sudden the weakness of the dark squares is brought into the limelight and the king is definitely exposed.

28...♘xf4

Defending the critical square by 28...♗g7 does not work due to 29 ♗e5! and in spite of 29...♘c4, 30 ♗xg7! ♕xg7 (30...♘xd2 31 ♘f6+ ♔xg7 32 ♘xd7 costs Black a piece) 31 ♘h6+ ♔h8 32 ♕d4 ♘c7 33 ♖e7 should win. 28...h5 does not secure the necessary refuge for the king because of 29 ♘h6+ ♔h7 (29...♔f8 loses to 30 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 31 ♘c5, etc.) 30 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 31 ♘f7 and the defence bursts on e6. If we add that 28...♘c4 fails to the obvious 29 ♘c5, we get a feeling of the difficulties Black is confronted with.

29 ♕xf4 ♖xe2

Eliminating the bishop did not diminish the pressure. The weakness of the dark squares and the king has remained very much visible. 29...♗g7 would parry the immediate threats, but then the queen's knight decisively joins the battle via c5.

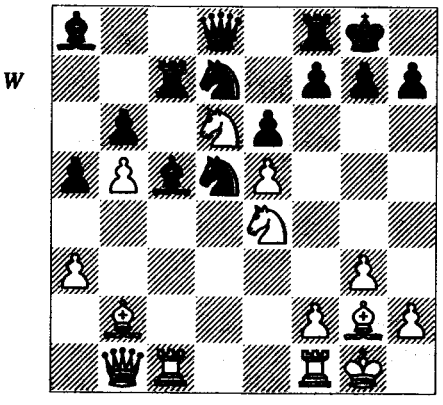
30 ♖xe2 ♖f8

30...♖e8 is no better due to 31 ♘c5 ♕c8 32 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 33 ♘h6+ ♔g7 34 g4, when the inevitable 35 g5 leads to mate.

31 ♘h6+ ♔g7 32 ♕d4+ ♔xh6 33 ♕h4+ ♔g7 34 ♖e7+

And White won.

In the cycle of metamorphosis, the spatial advantage on the kingside was transformed into a strong initiative leading in the end back to a material advantage sufficient for a win.



Roiz – Lerner
Israeli Ch (Tel Aviv) 2002

White's spatial dominance, accentuated by the centralized knights and pawns on the fifth rank, is indisputable. The cumbersome black pieces are susceptible to attack on both wings.

23 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 24 ♗d4

White opts for a prosaic but logical continuation: his target is the c-file.

24...♘d7 25 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 26 ♖c1 ♕b8 27 f4 ♖d8 28 ♕c2 ♘e7

White was threatening 29 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 30 ♕c7 ♕xc7 (or 30...♕a8 31 ♘c8) 31 ♖xc7, when the b6-pawn is lost.

29 ♕c7 ♗xg2 30 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 31 ♖c7 ♖d8 32 ♔xg2 ♘d5 33 ♖b7

Black has temporarily consolidated the defence of his shaky queenside pawns, but the lasting pressure on the seventh rank and on the b6-pawn must tell sooner or later.

33...f5 34 ♔f3 h6 35 g4 fxg4+

35...g6 is better.

36 ♔xg4 g6 37 ♘e4 ♖f8 38 ♘f6+ ♘7xf6+ 39 exf6 ♖f7 40 ♖b8+ ♖f8 41 ♖b7 ♖f7 42 ♖b8+ ♖f8 43 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 44 a4 ♔f7 45 ♔f3

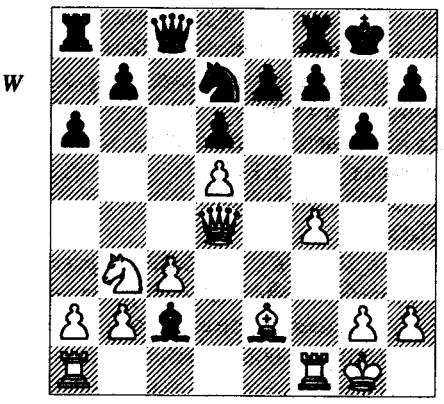
The simplification into an endgame has not changed the relations on the board. White's bishop targets the unfavourably placed pawns on dark squares, and he retains his space advantage. If Black plays a waiting game, the white king will penetrate via e5.

45...g5 46 fxg5 hxg5 47 ♔g4 ♘xf6+

47...♔g6 48 f7 ♔xf7 49 ♔xg5 is hopeless for Black.

48 ♔xg5 ♘d7 49 h4

Black has nothing to show against the advance of the distant passed pawn.



Fischer – Schwebber
Stockholm IZ 1962

Black has used a strange move-order in the opening, allowing White to seize a spatial advantage by impressively simple means. Black has placed his hopes in the exchange of queens and, surprisingly, in the dubious manoeuvre of the bishop to c2.

16 ♔h1 ♗xb3

16...♘c5 is strongly met by 17 ♘a5.

17 axb3 ♕c5

In case of 17...♘c5, 18 ♖a3 moves in the right direction; after b4 and c4 the rook would be transferred into the attack on the kingside.

18 ♕d2 a5 19 ♖a4!

The first fruit of the spatial advantage: the rook moves freely on the fourth rank. Its temporary destination is d4, to defend the d5-pawn.

19...b5 20 ♖d4 ♘f6 21 f5

The d5-pawn divides the board in two, facilitating White's kingside attack at the minor cost of ceding Black irrelevant queenside space.

21...b4

If Black expected 22 c4, hoping for counterplay on the a-file, the next move must have been disappointing for him.

22 ♗c4!

This stops Black's counterplay and frees White's major pieces to attack.

22...♔h8 23 ♕e2

On 23 ♕h6 Black would reply 23...bxc3 24 bxc3 ♘g8 25 ♕h3 ♔g7 26 ♖h4 ♘f6, when the direct attack does not work. White, therefore, detects the weak spot.

23...♕c7

23...bxc3 should be interpolated again, because it preserves chances for queenside counterplay. After the text-move, White fixes the structure on the queenside and the kingside becomes the main theatre of action – and there White's advantage is in no doubt.

24 cxb4 axb4 25 h3 g5

This lessens the tension.

26 ♖d3

Owing to White's dominance in space, the pressure exerted on the backward pawn will tie up the black defensive force and help White to build up his attack methodically.

26...♖a7

26...g4 is interesting, with the idea that 27 hxg4?! is answered by 27...♖g8 28 ♖e3 (28 ♖g3 ♖g5) 28...♖a7 29 ♖e1 ♖xg4, and 27 h4 by 27...g3 28 ♖xg3 ♖g8. However, 27 ♖e3 is more promising.

27 ♖e3 ♖b8 28 ♖e1 ♖bb7 29 ♕d2 ♕c8 30 ♖g3 ♕xf5

30...h6 can be answered with 31 h4 ♘h5 32 ♖f3.

31 ♖xg5 ♕d7

If 31...♕c8, then White replies 32 ♕d4 ♕c5? 33 ♕xf6+.

32 ♕d4

An obvious but powerful, paralysing move.

32...♖a8 33 ♖g3

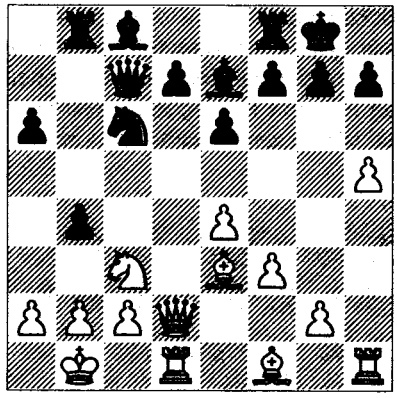
Played in order to prevent the simplifying 33...♖g8, when 34 ♖ge3 wins. From now on the pressure on the semi-open kingside files grows move by move.

33...♕f5 34 ♖ge3 ♖aa7 35 ♖f1 ♕g5 36 ♖fe1 ♕g7

This will free the knight, but enable White to enhance his space control and pressure.

37 ♕h4 ♘g8 38 ♖g3 ♕f6 39 ♕g4 ♖b8 40 ♖f1 ♕xb2 41 ♖xf7 ♖a1+ 42 ♔h2 1-0

This time it was the d5-pawn which secured manoeuvring space for the preparatory stage of the attack.



Short – Lutz
Budapest 2003

To White's advance on the kingside, Black responded by seizing space on the other wing. He probably expected the insipid 15 ♘a4 or 15 ♘e2, but White had a little surprise for him.

15 ♘d5! exd5 16 exd5

The knight sacrifice seemed a relatively simple pseudo-sacrifice, leading after 16...♗f6 17 dxc6 dxc6 18 ♗f4 ♗e5 19 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 20 h6 to White's advantage based on his superior pawn-structure and active pieces. However, Black finds a devious way to avoid the 'inevitable':

16...b3!? 17 cxb3 ♘b4 18 d6!

If this does not work, then 15 ♘d5 was not correct.

18...♕a5 19 a3 ♕f5+ 20 ♔a1 ♘c2+ 21 ♔a2 ♗f6

All forced, but suddenly we find out that 22 ♗d3 would be met by 22...♕e5 and one begins to doubt the soundness of White's play.

22 ♗a7

A useful *zwischenzug*, forcing the rook off the b-file or to b7, where it stands in the bishop's way. As a matter of fact, it's not much of a choice.

22...♖a8

Black intends 23...a5, when the knight slips out of the trap.

23 ♗d3

There is no time to retreat the bishop: 23 ♗f2 a5 24 ♗d3 ♘b4+ 25 ♕xb4 ♕xd3.

23...♕e5 24 ♕xc2 ♖xa7

A strange position. White has lost a piece for apparently inadequate compensation, but the

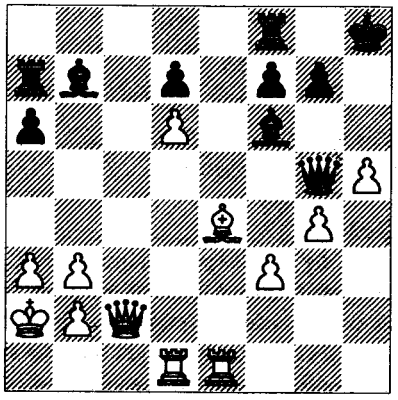
more attentively you look at the position, the more you notice other elements of compensation.

25 ♖he1 ♕g5

The h5-pawn and d6-pawn are obviously taboo, but 25...♕g3 does not work either due to 26 ♕c5 ♖b7 27 ♕f5. We start to understand that the far-advanced d-pawn has cut the board in two, leaving behind it a large amount of free space for the white pieces, while the black force is denied meaningful coordination.

26 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 27 ♗e4 ♗b7 28 g4 *(D)*

B



After this move the reader will put aside all possible doubts. The kingside pawn avalanche starts to move and there is nothing that can stop it. White's huge spatial dominance has been put to work.

28...a5 29 ♕f2 ♗xe4 30 ♖xe4 ♖b7 31 ♕e2

White can prepare 32 f4, because 31...♖xb3 would fail to 32 ♔xb3 ♖b8+ 33 ♔a4.

31...♕b5 32 ♖d3 ♖bb8 33 f4 ♔g8

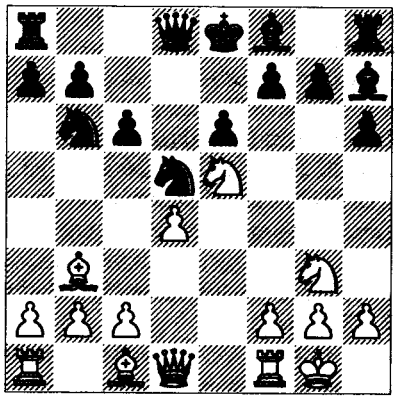
33...g5 fights for the remnants of space and is consistent with the previous move.

34 g5 ♗d8 35 ♖e5 ♕a6 36 ♕e4 ♖b6

Now the timid 37 ♖ed5 postponed the inevitable, but 37 h6, threatening 38 h7+ ♔h8 39 ♖e8, could have decided quicker. White's superiority in space, protected by the d6-pawn, was worth a whole piece.

We could say in general that far-advanced central pawns make the task of the inferior side difficult. Like an umbrella, they shield a large manoeuvring space behind them. The consecutive metamorphoses tend to harm the passive side. In the same context of spatial advantage I find the use of centralized pieces (especially a knight placed on e5 or d5), equally dangerous.

B



Fischer – Portisch
Stockholm IZ 1962

A somewhat suspect opening line led Black into this position. Having moved a knight to a dominant central position, White is ready to seize a significant spatial advantage by a routine series of moves, including ♕e2, ♖d1, c4 and f4. Under the circumstances Black's development must include the fight against the e5-knight, which is not an easy task.

12...♘d7 13 c4 ♘5f6 14 ♗f4 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♗d6 16 ♕e2 0-0 17 ♖ad1 ♕e7

Exchanging a pair of knights has alleviated the pressure, but further exchanges would mean surrendering the d-file.

18 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 19 f4 c5

Having decided on a healthy waiting attitude, Black should stick to it. However, either he missed the strong rejoinder or he wrongly assessed the resulting endgame.

20 ♕e5!

The issue is the d-file. For the time being it's far from clear what the capture of the file brings, and Black was tempted to accept the offer.

20...♕xe5

Wiser for the experience he would have replied 20...♖fd8, although 21 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 22 dxc5 ♖dc8 23 f5 ♖xc5 24 fxe6 fxe6 25 ♖d6 still favours White.

21 dxe5

Not, of course, 21 fxe5 ♘d7.

21...♘e4 22 ♖d7 ♘xg3 23 hxg3 ♗e4

Black's defence is based on the manoeuvre ...♗e4-c6 and indeed 24 ♖fd1 ♗c6 25 ♖7d6 ♖fc8 26 ♖1d2 ♔f8 27 ♗d1 ♔e7 28 ♗f3 ♗xf3 29 ♖d7+ ♔e8 30 gxf3 ♖d8 leads to a draw. However, that is not the critical option...

24 ♗a4!

This makes the difference: by preventing 24...♗c6, White will secure an advantageous position for his rook on the open file.

24...♖ad8 25 ♖fd1 ♖xd7 26 ♖xd7 g5

The idea is 27...g4, obtaining an unapproachable fortress. However, that was not to be either...

27 ♗d1! ♗c6 28 ♖d6 ♖c8 29 ♔f2 ♔f8 30 ♗f3 ♗xf3 31 gxf3

Precise. 31 ♔xf3 ♔e7 32 ♔g4 f5+ gets White nowhere.

31...gxf4?!

Possessing a passed pawn is not always desirable. Left alone, the h6-pawn becomes a liability. Later analysis proved that 31...♔e7 32 f5 exf5 33 ♖xh6 ♖c6 makes Black's defensive task easier. On the sixth rank the rook switches quickly from defence into attack while 34 ♖xc6 bxc6 leads to an impregnable fortress.

32 gxf4 ♔e7 33 f5

The difference is now obvious: Black cannot afford the exchange of rooks and, what is more, he cannot allow 34 f6+.

33...exf5

After 33...♖g8 34 f6+ ♔e8 35 ♖d1 Black will soon run out of good moves.

34 ♖xh6 ♖d8 35 ♔e2 ♖g8 36 ♔f2 ♖d8 37 ♔e3 ♖d1

Generally speaking, in rook endgames it is of the greatest importance to limit the activity of the opponent's king. Therefore, 37...♖d4 is stronger: 38 b3 f4+ 39 ♔e2 ♖d8 40 ♖f6 ♖d4 and Black can still hold on in spite of the dangerous advance of the a-pawn. For instance, after 41 a4 ♔e8 (if 41...b6, then 42 a5 bxa5 43 ♖a6 ♖d7 44 ♖xa5 ♖b7 45 ♔d3! ♖xb3+ 46 ♔e4) 42 a5 ♔e7 43 a6 b6 44 ♖c6, which was assessed by numerous annotators as giving White a clear advantage, there is 44...♖d7 (but not 44...♔d7? 45 ♖xb6) and it is not clear how White can improve his position.

38 b3 ♖e1+

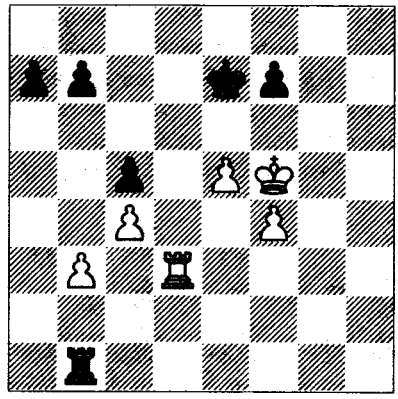
If 38...♖a1, then 39 ♖h2.

39 ♔f4 ♖e2 40 ♔xf5 ♖xa2 41 f4 ♖e2

41...♖b2 42 ♖h7 is similar to the game.

42 ♖h3 ♖e1 43 ♖d3! ♖b1 *(D)*

Black is forced to leave the e-file. The waiting 43...♖e2 is proved insufficient by 44 ♖d5 b6 45 ♖d3 ♖e1 46 ♖h3 ♖e2 47 ♖h8 ♖e3 48 ♖a8, winning.



44 ♖e3 ♖b2?

Pressed by the expert manoeuvring of a great endgame connoisseur, Black opts for an inferior continuation. Against the simplifying 44...a6 Fischer had in mind yet another subtle procedure: 45 ♖d3 b5 46 ♔e4 bxc4 47 bxc4 ♖e1+ 48 ♔d5 ♖f1 49 ♖a3 ♖xf4 50 ♖xa6 ♖d4+ 51 ♔xc5 (also assessed as a win), but Black continues to resist. For instance, 51...♖d1 52 ♖h6 (or 52 ♖d6 ♖e1 53 ♔d5 ♖d1+ 54 ♔c6 ♖e1 55 ♖d5 ♔e6 56 c5 ♖a1) 52...♔d7 53 ♖f6 ♔e7 54 ♔b6 ♖e1 55 ♖f5 ♔e6 and now 56 ♖h5 ♔d7 or 56 ♖f6+ ♔e7.

45 e6 a6 46 exf7+ ♔xf7 47 ♔e5 ♖d2 48 ♖c3

By preventing 48...b5, White earns time for f5.

48...b6 49 f5 ♖d1 50 ♖h3 b5 51 ♖h7+ ♔g8

Or 51...♔e8 52 ♔e6.

52 ♖b7 bxc4 53 bxc4 ♖d4 54 ♔e6

After 48 ♖c3 and 52 ♖b7, White produces another little finesse.

54...♖e4+

54...♖xc4 loses to 55 ♖b8+ ♔h7 56 f6, etc.

55 ♔d5 ♖f4 56 ♔xc5 ♖xf5+ 57 ♔d6 ♖f6+ 58 ♔e5 ♖f7 59 ♖b6 ♖c7 60 ♔d5 ♔f7 61 ♖xa6 ♔e7 62 ♖e6+ ♔d7 63 ♖d6+

The last point.

63...♔e7

63...♔c8 is not available because of 64 ♖c6, and so the king remains cut off.

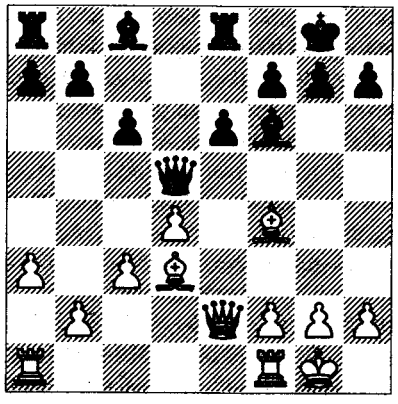
64 c5 ♖c8

If 64...♖a7, then 65 ♔c6 decides.

65 c6 ♖c7 66 ♖h6 ♔d8 67 ♖h8+

There is always time to stumble. 67 ♔d6? ♖d7+ would have done so.

67...♔e7 68 ♖a8 1-0



Lasker – Capablanca
Moscow 1935

At the end of the opening phase, Black has a tough nut to crack: how to activate his queen's bishop. There are no easy solutions because White is stopping the usual freeing moves: ...c5 would not work because of ♗e4, while White's next move takes care of ...e5.

15 ♖ad1 ♗d7?!

The fianchetto was not entirely appealing, but instead of the awkward text-move, 15...a5 or 15...♕d8 looks more natural.

16 ♖fe1

Apart from this grinding continuation, White could afford the immediate 16 ♗e5!, causing discomfort to the exposed queen (16...♗xe5 loses to 17 ♗xh7+, as shown by Rabinovich).

16...♕a5 17 ♕c2 g6

17...h6 would expose the king to a line-up of queen and bishop on b1-h7 diagonal, and 17...♕h5 is met by 18 ♖e3.

18 ♗e5 ♗g7?!

Again 18...♕d8 seems more natural.

19 h4!

Commanding a clear spatial superiority, White intends to soften the defensive pawn wall in front of the black king before lifting his rooks into the attack.

19...♕d8

Black cannot oppose White's advance by 19...h5 because 20 ♗xg6 fxg6 21 ♕xg6 ♖e7 22 ♖d3 will eventually lead to victory.

20 h5

Having walked this far, from now on the h5-pawn is a Sword of Damocles hanging over the position of the black king.

20...♕g5 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♖e5 ♕e7

22...f5 does not compel White to open the h-file; instead he would continue 23 ♖de1 ♕xh5 24 ♗c4, when White regains the material with considerable returns: he will command the open file and cause great discomfort to the exposed black king.

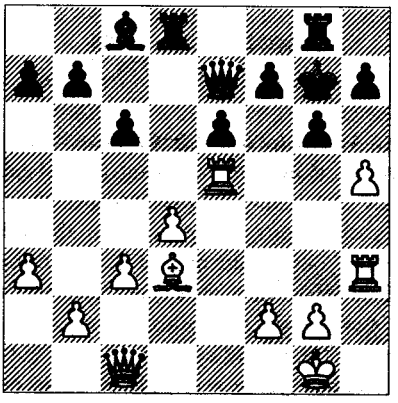
23 ♖de1 ♖g8

An ugly move, but we shall see later it has its defensive point.

24 ♕c1 ♖ad8 25 ♖1e3 ♗c8

The tempting ...f6 would have weakened the whole pawn-structure and it is no surprise that Black continues to avoid it on principle.

26 ♖h3 *(D)*



With vast amounts of kingside space at his disposal, White is able to move his major pieces into active attacking positions.

26...♔f8

This is the idea behind ...♖g8. Thrown on the ropes, Black decides to wait with his guard up. 26...♖h8 looks riskier, because 27 ♕f4 keeps the ominous tension: sometimes the exchange at g6 will be fatal, while sometimes the quiet h6+ will do the job. For instance, 27...f6 28 hxg6 hxg6 29 ♖g3 ♖h6 30 ♕xh6+, etc.

27 ♕h6+ ♖g7 28 hxg6 hxg6 29 ♗xg6! ♕f6 30 ♖g5!

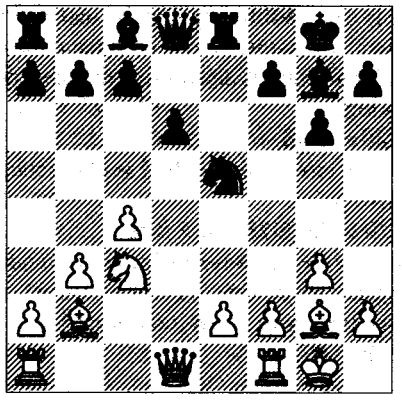
The winning point. The initiative has finally been converted into material.

30...♔e7

30...♖d5 does not help due to 31 ♖xd5 (but not 31 ♖f3? ♕xf3) 31...cxd5 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕xc8, etc.

31 ♖f3 ♕xf3 32 gxf3 ♖dg8

Black has little chance of avoiding defeat. Now 33 ♕h4 looks simplest.



Capablanca – Yates
Barcelona 1929

Here we see a typical pawn-structure which guarantees White an enduring spatial advantage. In our game it was brought about by Black's erroneous judgements in the double fianchetto, but it can appear in a number of variations. The first easily noticeable fact is White's command of the important central d5-square and the whole h1-a8 diagonal, but connected with it is the potential pressure on the other long diagonal (a1-h8) and a potential pawn advance on the kingside.

12 ♕d2 a5 13 ♖ac1

When carrying out a strategic plan one must be constantly on the alert against tactical counterplay: the threatened 13...a4 14 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 had to be dealt with.

13...♖b8 14 h3 ♗d7

Given that Black can hardly do without ...b6, it was better to play it at once.

15 ♘d5 b6

15...a4 is not an answer to the lack of space experienced by Black. Then 16 f4 ♘c6 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 b4 is in White's favour.

16 f4 ♘c6 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♕b2+ f6 19 g4!

Sometimes threats are obvious and yet we can do little about them. In order to meet g5 Black will need to eliminate the centralized white knight, but this comes at a price.

19...♘b4 20 g5 ♘xd5 21 cxd5

Some worrying features for Black have disappeared, but some troublesome new ones have emerged. Apart from the pin and White's large spatial advantage, there is also the concrete weakness of the backward c7-pawn.

21...♖c8 22 e4 c6

22...♗b5 would just help White to double rooks on the semi-open file, but the impatient attempt to get rid of the weakness violently cannot pass unpunished. Black's only excuse is his positionally desperate situation.

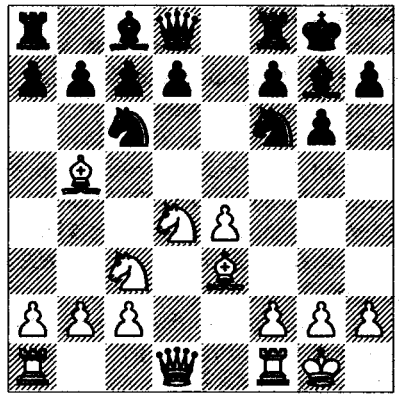
23 dxc6 ♖xc6 24 gxf6+ ♔f7 25 e5 ♖xc1 26 ♖xc1 dxe5 27 fxe5 ♕b8 28 ♕d4 ♗f5

Or 28...♗e6 29 ♖c6, when ♖xe6 hangs over Black.

29 ♗d5+ ♔f8 30 ♕f4

Black's position is beyond hope.

The pawn-formation favoured White and he proceeded to take advantage of it in exemplary manner. The lesson is simple: some unfavourable structures must be avoided and fought against early on in the game. Let us learn from the next encounter.



Englisch – Steinitz
London 1883

Had Black decided to simplify the position in the centre by 8...♘xd4 9 ♗xd4 d6, he would have accepted an inferior pawn-structure of the

kind Yates was burdened with in his game against Capablanca. However, Steinitz knew better...

8...♘e7!

The fight for the centre and free development is on. Since 9 e5 would be answered by 9...♘fd5, Black strengthens his influence on the critical central square and gets ready to play 9...d5.

9 ♕d2 d5 10 exd5 ♘exd5 11 ♘xd5 ♕xd5

The pawn advance has freed Black's game. As a consequence, the degree of coordination of Black's pieces is higher and his position in general promising.

12 ♗e2 ♘g4 13 ♗xg4 ♗xg4

The first transformation of values takes the form of a potentially strong bishop-pair. White must now be very careful.

14 ♘b3?!

The forthcoming exchange of queens simplifies the position, but simplifications do not always help the inferior side, as sometimes naïvely believed. 14 f3 ♗d7 15 ♖fd1 is better, all the more so because the text-move could also be met favourably by 14...♕c4.

14...♕xd2 15 ♘xd2 ♖ad8 16 c3

This limits the scope of Black's fianchettoed bishop, but unpleasantly weakens the d3-square. However, Black was threatening 16...♗xb2 17 ♖ab1 ♗d4, when he would get away with his prey.

16...♖fe8 17 ♘b3 b6

By methodically limiting the scope of the white minor pieces, Steinitz gradually increases his space advantage.

18 h3 ♗e6 19 ♖fd1 c5 20 ♗g5 f6 21 ♗f4

21 ♗e3 looks more accurate.

21...♔f7 22 f3 g5!

After the knight's activity has been curtailed, the pawn advance on the kingside will limit the white bishop and seize space on that wing as well.

23 ♖xd8?!

23 ♗c7 ♖c8 24 ♗d6 brings at least a temporary relief.

23...♖xd8 24 ♗e3 h6

Black consistently increases his spatial advantage: 25...f5 has been prepared.

25 ♖e1 f5 26 f4 ♗f6 27 g3?!

It was the last moment for 27 ♘d2.

27...a5 28 ♘c1 a4

By threatening 29...a3, Black provokes an enduring weakness of the light squares on the queenside and forces the white knight into hopeless passivity.

29 a3 ♗c4 30 ♔f2 gxf4! 31 ♗xf4 ♗g5

Offering the exchange of bishops is logical now that the light-squared bishop is superior to the knight. An exchange of rooks would leave an open path of penetration to the black king via d5.

32 ♗xg5 hxg5 33 ♔e3 ♔f6 34 h4

By seizing space gradually on both wings, Black has pushed his opponent into a state in which even bad moves (rather than catastrophic ones) are not so abundant. This advance could not be prepared by 34 ♖h1 due to 34...♔e5 35 h4 f4+.

34...gxh4 35 gxh4 ♖e8+ 36 ♔f2 ♖xe1 37 ♔xe1 ♔e5 38 ♘e2

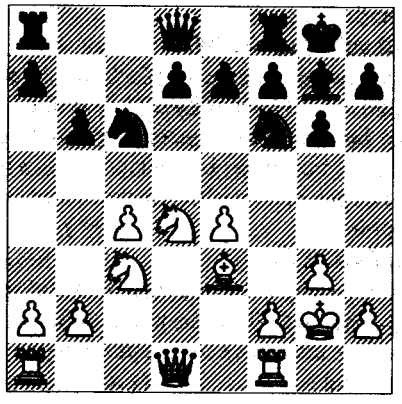
Or 38 h5 ♔f6, etc.

38...♗xe2 39 ♔xe2 ♔f4 40 c4 ♔g4 41 ♔e3 f4+ 42 ♔e4 f3 43 ♔e3 ♔g3 0-1

It is impressive that in those distant years Steinitz understood so profoundly the threat contained in his opening pawn-structure and fought his way against it with such consistency.

Another central pawn set-up that can bring serious spatial difficulties for the inferior side is the Maroczy Bind, though this name covers a variety of related pawn-formations. Some classical examples will suffice:

B



Botvinnik – Lilienthal
Moscow 1936

When Black fails to free himself in the early phase of the lines classified as the Maroczy

Bind, then he must be prepared to fight the game in uncomfortable circumstances of reduced space. The strong white centre makes it a pleasant game for his opponent.

11...♕c8 12 b3 ♕b7 13 f3 ♖fd8 14 ♖c1 ♖ac8 15 ♕d2

The queen manoeuvre to b7 came too late; the pressure on the white centre is feeble and no freeing blows are possible.

15...a6

15...e6 16 ♖fd1 d5 would fail to 17 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 18 cxd5 exd5 19 ♗g5. Black is forced into passive defence.

16 ♖fd1 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 d6

This was necessary in view of the threatened 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘d5.

18 a4

Simple but strong: the undermining ...b5 cannot be allowed.

18...♘e8

Expecting the exchange at g7, Black planned to bring the knight into play via e6, but the insufficiently protected b6-pawn will cause him new difficulties. However, the manoeuvre ...♘d7-c5, which in other circumstances might be preferable, invites the unpleasant advance of the h-pawn.

19 ♘d5 ♖c6

A clumsy move, but 19...b5, with which Black has been flirting ever since he played 15...a6, does not work due to 20 cxb5 axb5 21 a5, when the passed pawn becomes a major force in the struggle ahead.

20 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 21 h4!

An awkward moment for Black. The intended 21...♘e6 would be met by 22 h5. While keeping the lid on Black's queenside counterplay, White does not forget his chances on the other wing. His powerful position in the centre makes it possible.

21...♖e8 22 ♖c3

Black is reluctant to weaken his king's position by ...h5, but White has more useful waiting moves. The text-move makes possible the doubling of rooks.

22...♘h5 23 ♕d4 b5?

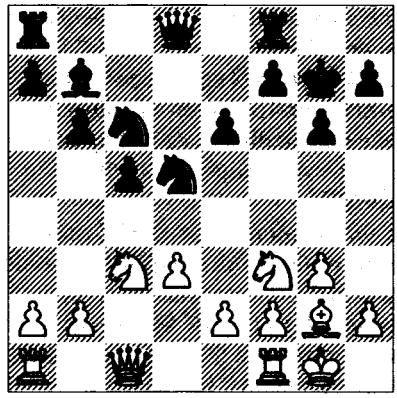
Black loses patience. Here the minority attack opens the way to a white passed pawn. Having accepted the passive role, he should have played it to the end. It is true, 23...♘f6, suggested by Botvinnik, leads nowhere after the planned 24 ♖dc1 (grabbing the pawn by 24 ♘xf6+ exf6 25 ♕xf6 does not work due to 25...d5), but the patient 23...♘g7 would pass the ball to White.

24 cxb5 axb5 25 ♖dc1 ♖xc3 26 ♖xc3 bxa4 27 ♖c7 ♕b5

Obviously not 27...♕xb3 28 ♘xe7+ with mate.

28 bxa4 ♕e2+ 29 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 30 ♔xf2

The passed pawn is unstoppable.



Larsen – Tal
Leningrad IZ 1973

To White's restrained pawn set-up Tal responded actively, seizing space in the centre. We have already reached the moment when White must be cautious in his options.

13 h4

The simplifying 13 ♘xd5 can be met by 13...♕xd5, when 14 ♕c3+ ♔g8 15 ♘e5? fails to 15...♘d4.

13...♘d4 14 ♖e1 h6 15 ♘e5?

It was time to seek safety by 15 ♘xd4 cxd4 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♕f4. White was probably carried away with the idea of ♘g4, missing Black's prosaic counter-threats.

15...♘xc3

This simple move forces White to play an unambitious response given that 16 bxc3 ♗xg2 favours Black after 17 cxd4 ♕xd4, 17 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ or 17 ♘g4 h5.

16 ♕xc3 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ 18 ♘f3 ♖ad8 19 ♔g1 e5

So we reach a sort of the Maroczy Bind in reverse, narrowing White's options. It is hard to

tolerate such a dominant centralized knight at d4, but it is hard to exchange it as well.

20 ♘xd4 exd4 21 ♕c4

Larsen expressed the opinion that 21 ♕a3 was preferable, based on 21...a5 22 ♕b3 ♕c6 23 e4 dxe3 24 ♖xe3, but Black can continue 21...♖fe8 22 ♕xa7 ♖d6 following his game prescription.

21...♕h5!

The spatial advantage obtained by the wedge at d4 makes White's king's position sensitive and Tal's decision understandable.

22 ♕a4?

The course of the game testifies that the white king is in greater danger than it may seem at this point. In all probability 22 e4 was indispensable in order to ward off the attack.

22...♖fe8! 23 ♕xa7 ♖d6!

We know now that the a7-pawn was poisoned. While the white major pieces are scattered around, the black queen and rooks are poised to attack.

24 b4?!

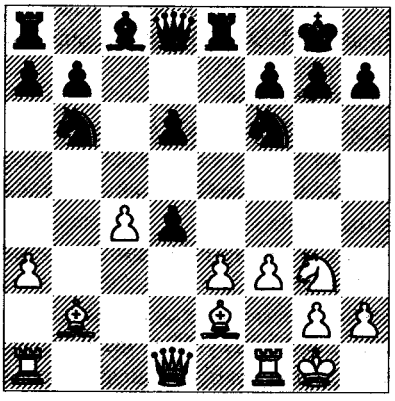
24 ♕c7 ♖f6 25 f3 is better. The light-hearted text-move makes it easy for Black.

24...♖f6

Not responding to provocation, the major pieces have taken optimal positions and now nothing can stop them.

25 bxc5 ♕f5 26 f3 ♕h3 27 ♕c7 ♖f5! 28 cxb6 ♖fe5 29 e4 ♕xg3+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xh4+ 31 ♔g2 ♖g5+ 32 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 33 ♔e2 ♖g2+ 34 ♔d1 ♕xf3+ 35 ♔c1 ♕f2 0-1

W



Botvinnik – Keres
The Hague/Moscow Wch 1948

When making the double exchange on d4, Black was hoping for 14 exd4 or 14 ♗xd4, when 14...d5 obtains the desired counterplay.

14 e4!

However, this move, delaying the capture of the d4-pawn, fixes the d6-pawn in its backward position – a decision of lasting consequence on the state of the centre and spatial balance.

14...♗e6 15 ♖c1 ♖e7

During the game Keres considered 15...♖c8 16 ♕xd4 ♘a4 17 ♗a1 ♘c5, when the threat of 18...♘b3 wins an important tempo, but preferred the text-move. He must have hoped to offset the pressure on the d6-pawn by the counter-pressure on the c4-pawn; besides, the vacated e8-square could be used to retreat the king's knight to a better defensive position.

16 ♕xd4 ♕c7?!

It is understandable that Black gave up the idea of 16...♘e8 when he noticed the manoeuvre ♘h5-f4-d5. It is more difficult to explain the lack of consistency in building counterplay on the isolated c4-pawn by 16...♖c7 or turning back to the defensive manoeuvre ...♘a4-c5 which he was considering a couple of moves earlier.

17 c5!

There is a good reason for this exchange, although it allows Black to get rid of his weak pawn. The white rook is forcefully lifted via the fifth rank into the attack on the black king.

17...dxc5 18 ♖xc5 ♕f4?

18...♕d8 is more tenacious, although it involves a loss of material after 19 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♘h5. Then 21...♖d2 22 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 at least wakes up the sleepy black pieces. Botvinnik had in mind to maintain the pressure by 19 ♕e3, but then 19...♘fd7 avoids the crushing attack which we shall soon witness.

19 ♗c1 ♕b8

Inserting 19...♖d7 forces the white queen away from its dominant attacking position, but 20 ♕b4 ♕b8 21 ♗b5 ♖d8 22 ♗g5 keeps a clear advantage for White.

20 ♖g5! ♘bd7

20...♘e8 fails to 21 ♘h5 f6 22 ♘xf6+.

21 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22 ♘h5+

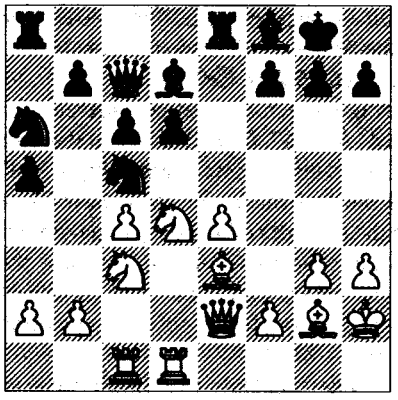
It turns out that by leaving the long diagonal, the dark-squared bishop found an even better one.

22...♔g6

22...♔h8 23 ♗g5 and 22...♔f8 23 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 24 ♕xf6 ♖d7 25 ♗g5 are no better than the game continuation.

23 ♕e3! 1-0

W



Smyslov – Fuderer
Hastings 1954/5

In a strange mixture of the King's Indian and Old Indian, Black has arranged his pieces passively. His knights are ineffectively posted, his king's bishop has spent two tempi just to sit on f8, which only makes the backward d6-pawn more vulnerable than usual.

16 ♕f3!?

Played to prepare ♘f5 and ♗f4, this unorthodox move at the same time begins to seize space and initiative on the kingside. It's true that 17 ♘f5 can be prevented by 16...g6, but that would weaken the f6-square and invite ♗g5-f6.

16...a4 17 ♘f5 ♖e6 18 ♕f4

Seemingly awkward, but effective. Taking into consideration the pressure on e4 and f5, White respects the imposed restrictions, but does not abandon his strategic plan.

18...♖f6 19 g4

The knight is supported and the g3-square vacated for the queen. Black is getting squeezed slowly but inexorably.

19...♖e8

19...g6 20 ♘h6+ certainly cannot be recommended to Black.

20 ♕g3 h6 21 ♖d2

It's time to increase the pressure on the d6-pawn by doubling rooks. The white pieces achieve full harmony.

21...♗c8 22 ♖cd1 ♕a5 23 ♗f4

Opening the third rank rules out 23...a3. White's pressure on the d-file has now become critical, and Black is forced to make concessions.

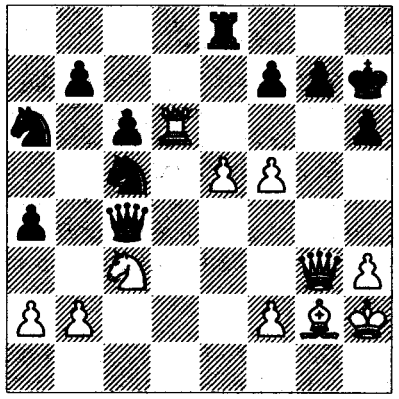
23...♗xf5 24 gxf5 ♕b4 25 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 26 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 27 ♖xd6 ♔h7

The threat of ♖xh6 must be parried, giving White a valuable tempo.

28 e5 ♕xc4 *(D)*

If 28...♕xb2, then 29 e6.

W



29 ♖g6!

Black has succeeded in keeping the material balance, but White's spatial superiority offers him a tactical solution.

29...♖g8 30 ♖g4 ♕d3 31 ♗e4!

Another important tactical nuance: simplifications do not lessen the pressure.

31...♕d2 32 e6!

Since refusing the exchange by 32...f6 would be a sort of resignation, a passed pawn appears as a final product of White's dominance in space and initiative.

32...fxe6 33 fxe6+

33 ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 34 f6+ mates.

33...♘xe4

Necessary because 33...♔h8 34 e7 ♕d7 35 ♕e5 is untenable.

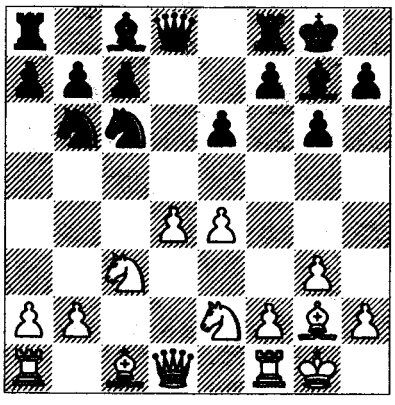
34 ♘xe4 ♕xb2 35 ♕f4 ♘b4 36 e7 ♘d3 37 ♘f6+ 1-0

37...♔h8 38 ♕xh6+ leads to mate.

Black's battle array after the opening was unpromising and visibly influenced the subsequent events. We learn that the positions characterized by the Maroczy Bind and kindred pawn-structures yield as a rule a significant

spatial advantage, which gets transformed in time into wing actions and a strong initiative.

A full pawn-centre forebodes even more difficulties for the inferior side. Its effects are multiple. On one hand, there is that general squeezing effect on the forces facing the centre, limiting their manoeuvring and developing possibilities. In addition, some side effects affect the already developed enemy pieces, which often happen to stray out of play and lose coordination with the main force. On the other hand, the full pawn-centre, ready for quick thrusts at any moment, has a tremendous piercing power, which is not easy to contain. However, when the breakthrough does not work, there often remain slower but no less effective wing actions, which find strong and durable support in the superiority in the centre. We shall check in what measure tournament practice supports these affirmations.



Euwe – Robatsch
Bern 1957

A mistaken order of moves led Black into this position. He hoped for 10 d5 exd5 11 exd5 ♘e5 with fine play. What he had missed was quite unpleasant:

10 e5!

A move with multiple purposes: the pressure on the d4-pawn has suddenly ceased and the black bishop-pair is temporarily immobilized; the g2-bishop's activity is enhanced; the e4-square is vacated to centralize the queen's knight; the f6-square is targeted as a potential weakness.

10...♘b4

The first impulse must have been to free the bishop by 10...f6 but after 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘e4 difficulties persist; for example, 12...♗xd4 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♘f6+ ♔g7 16 ♗xc6 ♕xd1 17 ♖axd1 bxc6 18 ♘g4 or 12...♗g7 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 ♗f4.

11 ♘e4 h6 12 ♘f6+ ♔h8

Exchanging the bishop for the knight would weaken the complex of the dark squares around the king. For instance: 12...♗xf6 13 exf6 ♕xf6 14 ♗xh6 ♖e8 (or 14...♖d8 15 ♕d2) 15 ♘c3.

13 h4 c5

There is a sense of urgency in this move, played against the rapidly growing pressure on the king's position, but White ignores it, although the simple 14 dxc5 is also advantageous for him.

14 ♘g4!

This opens the position further.

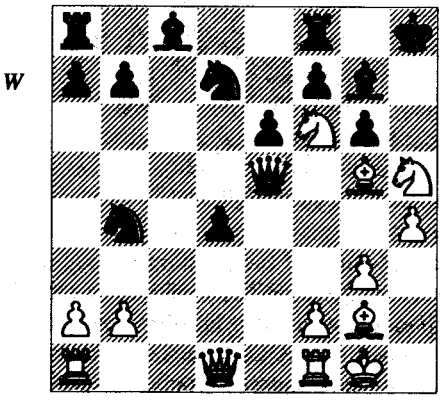
14...h5

14...cxd4 15 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 16 ♘xh6 leaves holes around the king and 14...♔h7 unfortunately does not satisfy due to 15 h5 cxd4 16 ♗e4 with unbearable pressure.

15 ♗g5 ♕c7 16 ♘f6 cxd4 17 ♘f4 ♕xe5 18 ♘4xh5

What counts is not the material balance on the board, but the material superiority on the sector where the battle is waged. White threatens 19 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♘g4 ♕d6 21 ♗f6+ ♔h7 22 ♗xd4. Robatsch finds the best defence...

18...♘d7 *(D)*



19 ♖e1

White could win an exchange by 19 ♘g4 or 19 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♗e7, but he

prefers full activity of his pieces rather than making material gains.

19...♕d6 20 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 22 ♗f4 ♕b6 23 ♗e5+ f6 24 ♗xd4 ♕c7 25 ♖c1 ♘c6 26 h5!

In the meantime the pawn-centre has been destroyed, but the spatial preponderance has stayed with White. The text-move will open the king to new threats.

26...e5

26...g5 does not work due to 27 ♕d3.

27 ♗c5 ♖h8 28 ♗d6 ♕c8 29 hxg6 ♗f5

It seems that Black has avoided the worst, but White's actively posted pieces break through in a sequence of tactical blows:

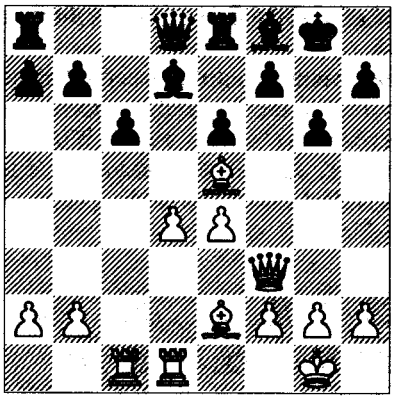
30 ♗xc6! bxc6 31 ♖xe5!

This sacrifice is based on simple calculation: 31...fxe5 loses to 32 ♗xe5+ ♔h6 (or 32...♔g8 33 ♗xh8 ♗xg6 34 ♕d4 ♕b7 35 ♖xc6, etc.) 33 ♕d2+ ♔xg6 34 ♗xh8 ♕xh8 35 ♖xc6+, etc.

31...♔xg6 32 ♖e7 ♖h3 33 ♖c4 1-0

33...c5 34 ♖xc5 ♕h8 35 ♕f3 is winning for White.

W



Euwe – Flohr
Amsterdam 1938

Some features of the position remind us of the previous game. White again has a significant spatial advantage, while Black is passive and cramped on his back ranks. Besides, the complex of dark squares around his king has been weakened dangerously.

21 ♗f6

An ingenious tactical idea lies behind this move. Note in passing that 21...♗e7 would not painlessly avoid the planned continuation because 22 e5 maintains strong pressure. The weakness of the dark squares around the king continues to worry Black and it is easy to imagine attacking continuations which include a rook-lift on the third rank.

21...♕a5 22 ♖c5!

Sometimes it is possible to transform a spatial dominance straight into an attack by tactical means. For the time being it is obvious that on 22...♗xc5, 23 dxc5 wins an important tempo, while the black king is bereft of protection. So the queen's rook is transferred into a direct attack on the other wing.

22...♕xa2 23 ♖h5 e5 24 dxe5 ♗e6 25 ♕f4 ♕xb2 26 ♗f1

We shall see that 26 ♗f3 is more precise, because soon the f2-pawn will unexpectedly need defence.

26...♗e7! *(D)*

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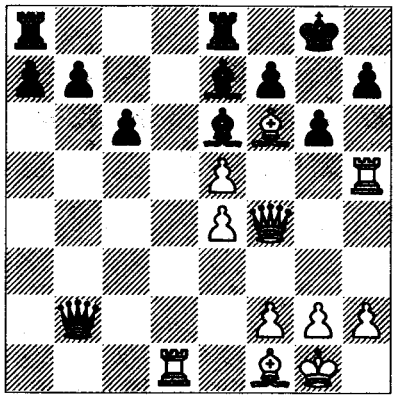


The only defence against the threatened 27 ♕h4. At the same time 27 ♖xh7 is parried by 27...♗xf6.

27 ♕h4 ♗c5

Clever again. 28 ♖xh7 is prevented by the counter-sacrifice 28...♕xf2+.

28 ♖h6 a5 29 ♖d3!

Another fine point. White has in mind 30 ♖f3, when the h7-pawn cannot be protected any longer. 29...♗c4 is excluded owing to 30 ♖xh7 when the counter-sacrifice on f2 does not help because the crucial h3-square is not under control any more.

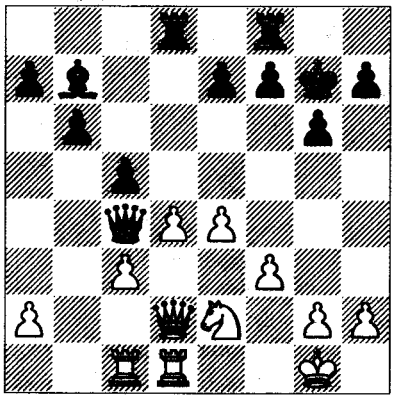
29...♕xf2+

29...♗g4 is just a temporary solution: it succumbs to the modest 30 h3. Only the material

sacrifice keeps the game going, but for some time only...

30 ♕xf2 ♗xf2+ 31 ♔xf2 a4 32 ♗e2 ♖a5 33 g4

The king is finally in the mating trap. ♖xh7 can be prevented only at a high material cost.



Spassky – Larsen
Beverwijk 1967

The potentially mobile pawn-centre is White's main asset, but for now it is well controlled and Black's pressure exerted on it could grow by doubling rooks. What can White do to prevent the pressure and enhance its mobility? Spassky finds an answer in his next move...

19 ♘g3!

The manoeuvre ♘f1-e3 will expel the queen from its cosy position and free the pawns to advance. At the same time, when the knight reaches e3 it will look aside to g4, creating tactical threats on the kingside, which explains Black's following preparations to retreat his queen to f7.

19...f6 20 ♘f1 ♕f7 21 ♘e3 cxd4 22 cxd4 ♖d7 23 d5!

The pawn wedge is apparently exposed to 23...e6, but 24 ♘g4 makes it work by tactical means: 24...exd5 loses to 25 e5 f5 26 ♕h6+ ♔h8 27 e6.

23...♖fd8

23...h5 is somewhat better.

24 ♘g4 h5

There is no time for 24...e6 due to 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 e5.

25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♘e3 ♕g7 27 ♕f4 ♔h7

Black has warded off the direct threats, but his pawn-structure and bishop continue to be inferior.

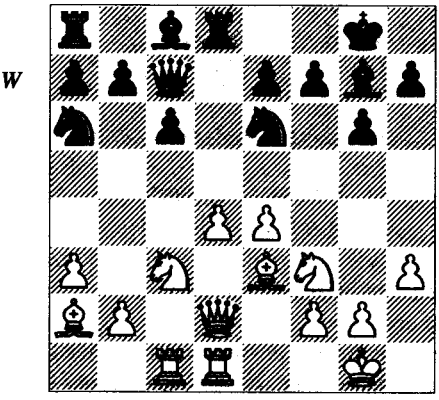
28 ♔f2 ♕f7

On 28...♕h6 White would continue coldbloodedly 29 g3 ♕xf4 30 gxf4 with a clear advantage in the endgame. So willy-nilly 29...e6 is still on Black's mind, but White's spatial advantage on the kingside can be turned into new threats...

29 g4! hxg4 30 ♕xg4 ♕g7 31 ♖g1

and Black was facing insoluble difficulties.

It took some time until the pawn advance in the centre emphasized the strong sides of the full pawn-centre. However, we should be aware that there is only one step between the mobile centre and the central thrust, after which the accumulated energy of the active supporting pieces may burst out in a sudden strong initiative.



Kotov – Gereben
Budapest – Moscow 1949

Against the concentrated power of the white force stand uncoordinated black pieces, as if haphazardly strewn on the board. It is no surprise that the mobile pawn-centre advances so vigorously:

20 d5! ♘f8 21 ♘g5! e6 22 d6

The breakthrough yields rich fruits: Black is reduced to his back ranks.

22...♕d7

Amusing things would happen after 22...♕a5 23 ♘d5 ♕xd2 24 ♘e7+ with mate.

23 f4 h6 24 ♘f3 b6 25 b4 ♗b7 26 ♘e5 ♕c8 27 ♕f2 ♘d7

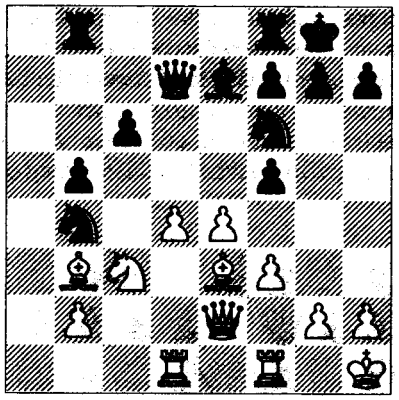
The e5-knight is so irritating that it must be eliminated, but this exchange weakens the black king's position. Now 28 ♘xf7 smashes through Black's defences, but Kotov preferred a quieter method:

28 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 29 e5 ♖ac8 30 ♕g3

The lack of space vitally limits Black's defensive possibilities. The king is more exposed than it seems at first sight: White threatens 31 f5 exf5 32 ♕xg6.

30...♔h7 31 ♘e4 c5 32 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 33 exf6 ♗e4 34 f5! 1-0

W



Yusupov – Ehlvest
St John Ct (1) 1988

The point h6 is indefensible.

We again have a position characterized by a mobile pawn-centre. Its advance seizes space and opens the game for the active white pieces.

22 d5!

White threatens 23 d6 and starts a series of forcing moves.

22...cxd5 23 e5 ♘e8 24 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♕c6 26 ♖c1 ♕a6 27 ♖d7

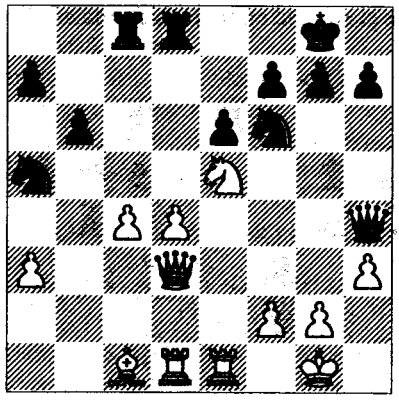
The central thrust produced grievous results for Black. The passive black pieces cannot withstand the combined pressure from the light-squared bishop and the rook on the seventh rank.

27...♖b7 28 ♕d3 g6 29 ♕d5 ♖xd7 30 ♕xd7 ♗b4 31 e6

and the defence was impotent.

In the series of previous examples it was the mobility of the pawn-centre which had such a decisive effect on the struggle. Many a time, however, some side-effects of the pawn-centre take a toll on the inferior side. Reduced space often leads to misplaced pieces and when the queen is affected, it becomes a major problem.

W



Alekhine – Euwe
The Hague Wch (10) 1937

An incautious sally to f4 and the subsequent ♘e5 reduced the black queen's potential to the minimum. The consequence is not very surprising: White starts to hunt the queen.

22 ♕e2!

Played in order to avoid 22...♘d7, which does not work any more due to 23 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 24 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 25 ♗d2 ♘c6 26 d5.

22...♖e8?!

We shall see from the course of the game that 22...h6 was indispensable here.

23 g4

Alekhine was proud of this move, which aims to trap the black queen, but 23 ♕f1! does so at once; for instance, 23...h6 24 g3 ♕h5 25 g4 ♕h4 26 ♘f3.

23...♘c6?

23...♕xh3? does not work because of 24 ♖d3 ♕h4 25 ♔g2, but 23...h6 24 ♔g2 ♘h7 gives the queen an exit.

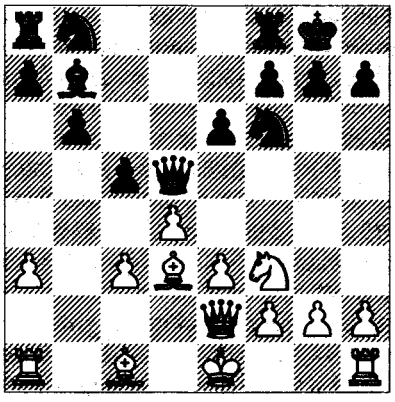
24 ♔g2

Black had to give up a whole piece to save his queen.

In the diagram on the following page, Black's queen is already precariously placed.

11 e4 ♕h5

Levin felt compelled to play this, rather than acquiesce to a passive position by retreating the



Reshevsky – Levin
USA Ch (New York) 1942

queen. 11...♘xe4 obviously does not work due to 12 c4 ♕c6 (if 12...♕f5 then 13 ♘g5, etc.) 13 ♘e5 ♕d6 14 ♗xe4 ♕xd4 15 ♗xb7 ♕c3+ 16 ♔f1 ♕xa1 17 ♕b2.

12 h3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗a6

Black believes the exchange of light-squared bishop is a good way to avoid his queen being besieged, counting on 14 ♗xa6 ♕a5+ 15 ♗d2 ♕xa6. However, White does not let his chance slip so easily.

14 ♗g5!

By cutting off its path along the fifth rank, White accentuates the black queen's uncomfortable situation.

14...♗xd3 15 ♕xd3 ♘bd7 16 0-0 ♖fc8

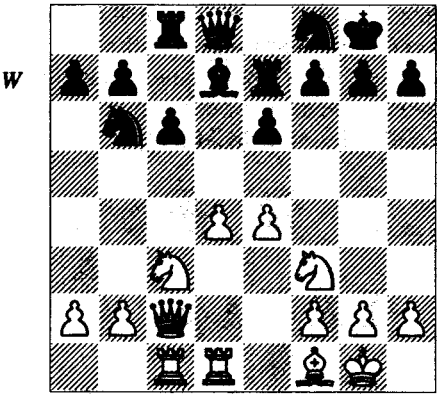
On 16...h6 White would continue 17 ♗xf6, when 17...♘xf6 18 ♘e5 again blocks the fifth rank. To avoid it Black would have to recapture with the pawn, but 17...gxf6 18 ♕a6 is clearly advantageous to White.

17 ♖ac1 ♕g6 18 ♖fe1 h6 19 ♗d2 ♖xc1 20 ♗xc1 ♖c8 21 ♗d2 ♖d8 22 ♕e2 ♘b8?

Not this! Giving White's knight the e5-square just leaves the black queen more miserable and the lost coordination of the black knights will have a lasting negative impact on the course of the struggle.

23 ♘e5 ♕h5 24 ♕c4 ♘e8 25 ♗b4 ♕g5 26 f4 ♕f6 27 a4

Black has been pushed into a miserable position where he can hardly move. Black's difficulties were generated repeatedly by the precarious position of his wayward queen, stranded on the edge of the board by a potent full pawn-centre. Difficulties of this kind affect other strayed pieces too, but it mostly remains a marginal problem in comparison with the general difficulties caused by a stable full pawn-centre whose stability makes possible wing attacks against passive set-ups.



Capablanca – Lasker
Havana Wch (11) 1921

It takes no more than a quick glance to conclude that the degree of passivity and the lack of coordination characterizing all the black pieces cannot result in meaningful counterplay. White will see to it that they stay passive and uncoordinated. Possessing a strong pawn-centre, he can afford to occupy more space on the queenside.

16 b4 ♗e8 17 ♕b3 ♖ec7 18 a4 ♘g6 19 a5 ♘d7 20 e5 b6

Necessary and good. Black must fight back if he does not wish to be stifled.

21 ♘e4 ♖b8 22 ♕c3

22 ♕a3 at once is more logical, but the pin on the b-file could be avoided more elegantly by 22 a6. Being in possession of d6 and b7, White could deprive his opponent of counterpressure.

22...♘f4 23 ♘d6 ♘d5 24 ♕a3 f6

Something had to be done against the d6-knight. However, wiser for the experience Lasker later thought that 24...bxa5 should have been included in order to avoid the unpleasant 27 b5.

25 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 26 exf6 gxf6 27 b5!

The minority attack reaches its culmination.

27...♖bc8

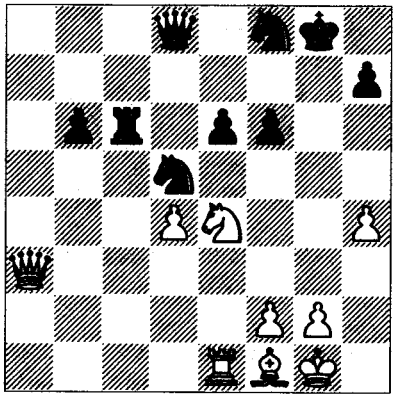
Neither 27...c5 28 dxc5 ♘xc5 29 ♗c4 nor 27...cxb5 28 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 29 ♕d6 can satisfy Black and he must accept an endgame where he is burdened by an inferior pawn-structure.

28 bxc6 ♖xc6 29 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 30 axb6 axb6 31 ♖e1 ♕c8 32 ♘d2

Given that the d4-pawn feels so safe, White can afford this manoeuvre, which activates the knight and at the same time opens the third rank for the queen. Note that in spite of simplifications White continues to control more space.

32...♘f8 33 ♘e4 ♕d8 34 h4 *(D)*

B



34...♖c7

Lasker severely criticized this move in the match book. He gave 34...f5!, continuing 35 ♘g5 h6 36 ♘f3 ♖c3 37 ♕a1 ♖xf3 38 gxf3 ♘f4 with excellent play. True enough, but White can insert 35 ♗b5, which spoils the idea, or even better, he can also include 35 ♕g3+ ♔h8 36 ♕e5+ ♔g8 and only then 37 ♗b5 ♖c7 38 ♘g5 ♖e7 39 ♗c4 ♘g6 40 ♕g3 with strong pressure; e.g., 40...♕c7 41 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 (or 41...♖xc7 42 ♗xd5) 42 ♘xe6, etc. (V.Vuković).

35 ♕b3 ♖g7 36 g3 ♖a7 37 ♗c4 ♖a5 38 ♘c3 ♘xc3

The strong knight at d5 has kept the loose black pawn-structure together, but the pressure exerted on it is getting unbearable. The exchange undoubtedly works in White's favour.

39 ♕xc3 ♔f7 40 ♕e3 ♕d6 41 ♕e4 ♖a4

The recommended move 41...♖a7 protects the seventh rank, but allows 42 d5, which further opens the king's position and keeps a clear advantage.

42 ♕b7+ ♔g6

42...♕e7 does not work due to 43 ♕c6, but 42...♔g8 is objectively more tenacious, although not without difficulties. For instance, 43 ♕c8 ♕xd4 (bad is 43...♔g7 44 d5!) 44 ♗xe6+ ♔g7.

43 ♕c8

Stronger is 43 ♗d3+! f5 (or 43...♔h6 44 ♕f7 e5 45 dxe5 fxe5 46 ♖xe5!, etc.) 44 ♗b5 ♖xd4 45 ♗e8+ ♔h6 46 ♕f7 ♖g4 47 ♕f6+ ♘g6 48 ♖xe6, when there is no perpetual check.

43...♕b4?

43...♖a7 is more tenacious, as given by Lasker. After 44 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 45 ♖xe6 ♕xd4 46 ♕g8+ ♔h5 it is not easy to endanger the vagabond on h5.

44 ♖c1

Again 44 ♗d3+ is a good option. For instance: 44...♔g7 (or: 44...♔h6 45 ♖b1 ♕d6 46 ♖xb6; 44...f5 45 ♖b1 ♕xd4 46 ♕xf8 ♕xd3 47 ♕g8+ ♔f6 48 ♕h8+ ♔g6 49 ♖xb6) 45 ♕c7+ ♔g8 46 ♖xe6! ♘xe6 47 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 48 ♗g6, etc.

44...♕e7

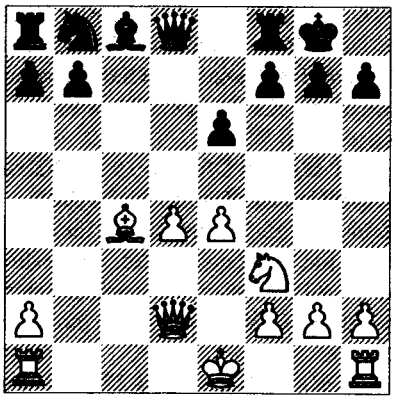
Capablanca examined 44...♕a3 45 ♗d3+ f5 (not 45...♕xd3 46 ♕e8+ ♔g7 47 ♖c7+) 46 ♖e1 ♖a8 47 ♖xe6+, etc. However, 44...♖a7 offers stronger resistance, although after 45 d5 exd5 46 ♗xd5 the defence remains difficult.

45 ♗d3+ ♔h6

45...f5 46 ♗xf5+! would be amusing.

46 ♖c7 ♖a1+ 47 ♔g2 ♕d6 48 ♕xf8+ 1-0

B



Petrosian – Tal
USSR Cht (Moscow) 1972

11...♘d7

In several previous high-level encounters Black did not manage to overcome his difficulties in the continuation 11...♘c6, which explains this more modest move, just played with the obvious intention of fianchettoing the queen's bishop and moving the knight to f6 to subdue the explosive white pawn-centre.

12 0-0 b6 13 a4

The minority attack points out at once the drawbacks of 11...♘d7. The advance captures space, but develops an initiative as well. Its final aim is to create a backward isolated pawn, a lasting target for the active white pieces.

13...♗b7 14 ♖fe1 ♖c8?!

Suetin proposed 14...e5!?, based on 15 d5 (15 dxe5 ♘xe5) 15...a6, but this passive set-up looks to me rather suspect. After 16 ♕b2 ♖e8 17 ♘d2 with the idea of ♗f1 and ♘c4 the pressure on the b6-pawn will become intense. Besides, 15 ♗d5 is also advantageous to White. On the other hand, the rook has no role on the c-file, so 14...♕e7 seems more natural.

15 ♗d3 ♘b8

There are positions in which one must suffer, which was never to Tal's liking. His 'active' continuation, based on a counter-attack on the d4-pawn, is far from realistic. Unfortunately, 15...a6 16 ♖ab1 or 15...♕e7 16 a5 is less good than a move before.

16 a5 ♘c6

16...bxa5 17 ♖xa5 ♘c6 is no better due to 18 ♖a4, when a central thrust is in the air.

17 axb6 ♘xd4?!

After 17...axb6 Black is saddled with a weak backward pawn, but that was the best he could get.

18 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 19 bxa7 ♖fd8 20 ♖a3!

Did Tal miss this strong defensive move? Now 20...♗xe4 would lose to 21 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xd2 23 g3. The loss of a pawn cannot be rectified.

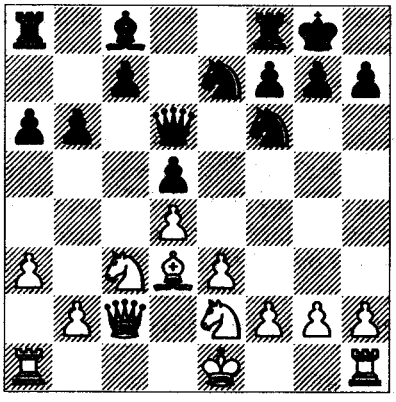
20...♗a8 21 h3 h6 22 ♖c1 ♕b6

This time 22...♗xe4 loses to 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 a8♕, etc., while 22...♖xc1+ 23 ♕xc1 ♗xe4 is inadequate due to 24 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 25 ♖b3.

23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♖a2 ♖c7 25 ♕e3

A simple technical procedure stands between White and victory. Black has no chances whether he swaps the queens or not.

The full pawn-centre yielded rich opportunities on the flank. In the circumstances of a fixed pawn-centre, although the power in the centre is shared, it is often feasible to seize the initiative on one of the flanks.



Euwe – Alekhine
Zurich 1934

The fixed centre characterizing this early middlegame position determines the strategic plans to be adopted by both players. Black has just played 11...b6, preparing to fianchetto or, if the chance presents itself, to free his game by playing ...c5. White will see to it that the latter cannot be done without some sort of concession.

12 b4 ♗b7 13 0-0 ♖fe8 14 ♘g3

The knight stands well on g3 in defence of the king and the central e4-square.

14...♘g6 15 ♖fc1

We begin to feel the drawback of the black fianchetto – the backward c-pawn, which can move only at a high price: 15...c5 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 dxc5 ♕xc5 18 ♘ce4 ♕e7? 19 ♘f5 ♕d7 20 ♘c5, etc.

15...♘h4 16 ♘ce2 c6?!

16...♖e7 is more logical, although the basic difficulties persist.

17 ♖ab1 ♖e7 18 a4 ♖ae8 19 a5 b5 20 ♘f4

The minority attack has achieved its goal. Black's pawn-formation has been impaired for good and the bishop hemmed in. It is time to move the knight to the strong c5-square.

20...♖c7 21 ♕c5 ♕d7 22 ♖e1

Sooner or later White will seek a chance to advance the pawn to e4, a typical breakthrough in this type of pawn-structure.

22...♘g6 23 ♗f5 ♕d8 24 ♘d3 ♗c8 25 ♖bc1 ♘e7 26 ♗xc8 ♘xc8 27 ♘e5 ♖e6 28 e4!?

Of course, 28 ♕c2 keeps a solid advantage, but White knows that as a rule when positions open up, it favours the more active side. He therefore accepts the potential weakness of the d4-pawn, but seeks compensation in the continuing pressure.

28...♘xe4

After 28...dxe4 29 ♘xe4 ♘d5, 30 g3 keeps the lid on. For example: 30...f6 31 ♘d3 and now 31...♖ce7 32 ♘c3 ♖xe1+ 33 ♘xe1 or 31...♕e7 32 ♕xe7 ♖exe7 33 ♘ec5; the weakness of the a6-pawn is irreparable.

29 ♘xe4 dxe4 30 ♖xe4 f6?

It is strange that Alekhine misses a fine tactical point. 30...♘e7 is indispensable.

31 ♘f7!

Beautiful!

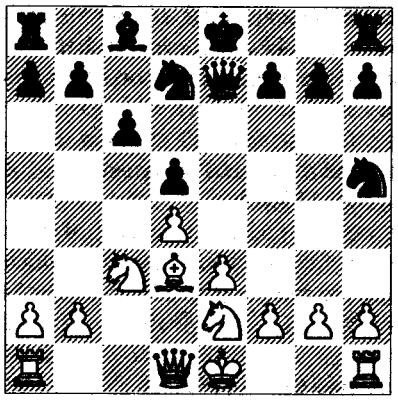
31...♕e8

31...♔xf7 loses to 32 ♕h5+ g6 33 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 34 ♕h8+.

32 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 33 ♘d8 ♕e4 34 ♘xc6 h6 35 d5

White is winning.

W



Kasparov – Spassky
Barcelona 1989

The simplifying manoeuvre ...♘h5 is a well-known method in various lines of the Exchange Queen's Gambit. As it may be expected, there is always some small price Black has to pay for it. This time he pays in space.

10 g4! ♘hf6 11 ♘g3 h6 12 h3

White has postponed castling, preferring to win space on the kingside. He can obviously afford it due to the closed character of the position. What's more, the kingside pawn advance makes it risky for Black to castle kingside.

12...♘b6 13 ♕d2 ♗d7 14 b3

A warning that the queenside might not be a peaceful refuge for the black king either.

14...g6

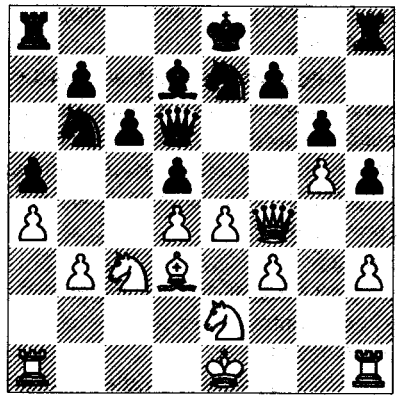
Or 14...♘c8 15 ♘f5 ♗xf5 16 gxf5 ♘d6 17 f3 0-0-0 18 0-0-0 and after ♖he1 White will carry out e4.

15 a4 a5 16 f3!

Having occupied space on both wings, White is ready for the central breakthrough. His central pawn-majority strongly supported by the minor pieces could be stopped only by 16...c5, which is not appealing because after 17 dxc5 ♕xc5 the manoeuvre ♘ce2-d4 will fix the isolated d5-pawn, keeping a significant spatial advantage.

16...h5 17 g5 ♕d6 18 ♘ge2 ♘g8 19 e4 ♘e7 20 ♕f4! *(D)*

B



A logical decision at the moment when Black has prepared to castle kingside and the white king starts to feel uncomfortable in the centre.

20...♕xf4

Note that it's difficult to refuse the exchange: 20...♕b4 would be put in question by 21 ♔f2, threatening 22 ♘a2.

21 ♘xf4 0-0 22 ♘ce2 h4

Squeezed in defence, Black is looking for counterplay by isolating the g5-pawn and keeping an eye on the h3-pawn.

23 ♘g2

White is seeking an optimal battle array. In order to increase their effectiveness, the king's knight is bound for e3 and the queen's knight will take its place on f4.

23...♔g7 24 ♔d2

An active king joins the minor pieces in maintaining the spatial plus.

24...dxe4?!

Giving ground in the centre enhances White's options and cannot be recommended. 24...♖h8 is better.

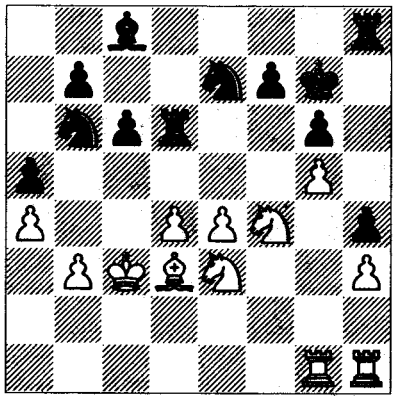
25 fxe4 ♖ad8 26 ♖af1 ♖h8 27 ♘e3 ♖h5 28 ♖fg1 ♗c8 29 ♔c3

As is proper in a well-conducted endgame, the king starts to play an important role.

29...♖hh8 30 ♘f4 ♖d6?! *(D)*

White will easily parry Black's threat of 31...♖hd8, and the rook at d6 gets in the way of necessary defensive moves. 30...♘a8 is correct.

W



31 ♗c2

31 ♘c4 ♘xc4 32 ♗xc4 is clearly advantageous to White in view of the pressure on f7.

31...♘a8?

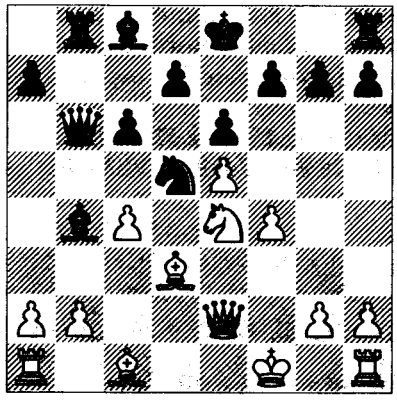
Was this a desperate pawn sacrifice to bring the useless b6-knight into play, or a blunder? Black realizes that 31...♖dd8 32 ♘c4 ♘xc4 33 bxc4 gives White an overwhelming spatial advantage, when the mass of central pawns wins just by moving forward, but 31...♖hd8 32 ♖d1 f5 holds on; for instance, 33 e5 (or 33 gxf6+ ♖xf6, when the pressure transfers to the f-file) 33...♘ed5+ 34 ♘exd5 ♘xd5+ 35 ♔b2 ♘xf4 36 exd6 ♖xd6.

32 ♘c4 ♖dd8 33 ♘xa5 ♘c7 34 ♖f1 b5 35 ♖f3 ♖hf8 36 ♖hf1 bxa4 37 bxa4

Black is a pawn down, still cramped and lacks meaningful counterplay.

In all these various types of pawn-structures, a lack of space influenced the course of the struggle in quite a significant measure. It narrowed the defensive measures until the passive and often uncoordinated pieces were worn down. It is also useful to note that the critical moment for the player who suffers the lack of space occurs when he tries to open up the position and free his pieces.

B



Adams – Radjabov
Enghien les Bains 2003

Black has managed to stop his opponent castling, but this does little to solve the burning problems he is facing: retreating the knight to the only place at its disposal, c7, hardly comes into consideration, considering the hole at d6 and the menacing advance of the queenside pawns. He is compelled to open the game. Let us see what will happen out of it...

13...f5 14 exf6 ♘xf6 15 ♘xf6+ gxf6 16 ♗e3

Given that 16...♗c5 does not work in reply, this developing move makes 17 ♔f2 possible, connecting rooks and synchronizing their further activity; an important step at a moment when Black is still in doubt what to do with his king.

16...♕a5 17 ♔f2 ♗e7?!

Taking into consideration the game continuation, Black would do better to castle (or even dare to play 17...d5).

18 c5!

This paralyses Black's central pawn-mass and leaves the black bishop-pair in a desperate situation. In the long run one cannot survive under such circumstances and Black is forced into desperate measures...

18...d5 19 cxd6 ♗xd6 20 ♖hd1 ♔e7 21 ♔g1

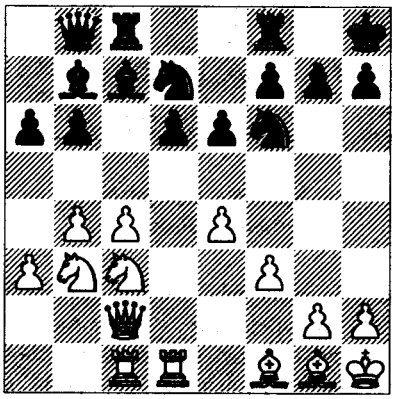
A wise decision. White castles 'by hand', while the black king remains poorly protected in the centre. The cost to Black of partially freeing his bishops is high – it has weakened his king's defences and broken up his pawn-structure.

21...♗c5 22 ♗xc5+ ♕xc5+ 23 ♔h1 ♕b4?!

On 23...♕d4 White planned 24 ♕g4 f5 25 ♕h4+ ♕f6 26 ♕f2 with the advantage. The text-move is definitely worse, because soon all the black weaknesses will be exposed to strong pressure.

24 ♕e3 ♕a5 25 b3 ♗d7 26 ♗c4 ♖bd8 27 ♖e1 ♕b6 28 ♕g3 ♖dg8 29 ♕h3 1-0

B



Dreev – Sashikiran
Esbjerg 2003

When White in similar systems manages to set his queenside pawns in motion, it's a sign of serious difficulties for his opponent. Black is facing not only a difficult technical problem, but a deep psychological one. It is not easy to sit and wait while White slowly but inexorably moves his pieces to optimal positions and the pawn-majority advances. At some point, sooner or later, he is tempted to open the position and fight for freedom. Then, as a rule, it's the time of crisis.

19...d5? 20 exd5 exd5 21 c5 ♗f4 22 ♖b1

The results of the central breakthrough are there for everyone to see. The dark-squared bishop has got out of prison, but at the cost of giving White a strong square on d4 and an advancing majority well supported by pieces. Black's situation has deteriorated.

22...♖fe8 23 ♘e2 ♗h6 24 ♘ed4 g6 25 ♕a2

By stepping out of the pin, White increases the pressure on the queenside.

25...♔g8

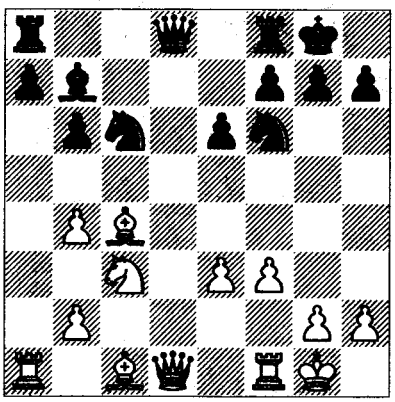
25...bxc5 26 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 27 bxc5 is not very pleasant for Black, while 25...b5 26 a4 or simply allowing cxb6 is even worse.

26 cxb6 ♗e3 27 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 28 ♕f2

White's spatial superiority has been transformed into an obvious positional advantage. Freeing a cramped position by violent means tends to come at a price.

In comparison with the above examples of rather common central pawn-structures, games with an indeterminate centre can develop in various ways, but the amount of space is always an important factor.

W



Petrosian – Spassky
Moscow Wch (10) 1969

The opening skirmishes produced exchanges which favour White. Far from being a liability for White, the doubled b-pawns will seize space and fix Black's positional weaknesses on the queenside, creating the conditions for an enduring initiative.

13 b5 ♘e5

13...♘a5 only temporarily shields the backward a7-pawn. 13...♘b4 14 e4 is not appealing for Black either.

14 ♗e2 ♕c7

14...♘d5 would be met by 15 ♗d2.

15 e4

The pawn-structure tells against Black, as it restricts his minor pieces.

15...♖fd8 16 ♕e1 ♕c5+ 17 ♕f2

Owing to his superior pawn-formation, White is happy with the reduction of material.

17...♕e7

17...♕xf2+ 18 ♔xf2 ♘d3+ 19 ♗xd3 ♖xd3 20 ♗e3 leaves Black burdened with the a7-pawn. Geller gave 17...♘fd7! 18 ♗e3 ♕b4! as the best solution for Black, but what happens after 19 ♗d4?

18 ♖a3

Having fixed the weakness on the a-file, it is time to increase the pressure on it.

18...♘e8

The knight is transferred to c8 in defence of the endangered pawn, but the manoeuvre increases the general passivity of the black structure.

19 ♗f4 ♘g6 20 ♗e3 ♘d6 21 ♖fa1 ♘c8 22 ♗f1

The e2-square is needed for the manoeuvre ♘e2-d4, when the pressure from the a-file can be easily moved to the c-file.

22...f5

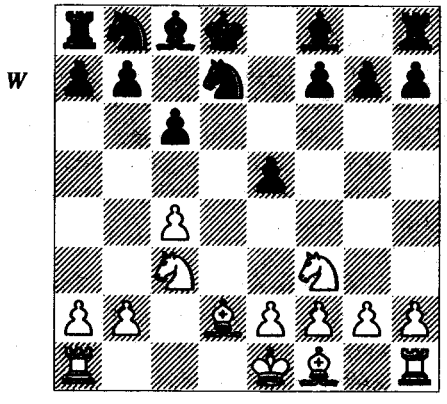
This side-blow will not fulfil expectations, but it is more difficult to propose anything better.

23 exf5 exf5 24 ♖a4 ♖e8 25 ♗d2 ♕c5

The endgame is bad, but Black is reduced to that level of inactivity where good ideas are simply not available.

26 ♕xc5 bxc5 27 ♖c4 ♖e5 28 ♘a4 a6 29 ♘xc5

Given that 29...axb5 does not work due to 30 ♘xb7, Black is dead lost.



Spassky – Gheorghiu
Siegen OL 1970

It does not seem that White can squeeze much out of this position (which is from a form of Old Indian) due to its closed character. However, the very next move demands a reassessment.

8 g4!

This pawn advance seizes space on the kingside, and gives additional meaning and strength to White's small initial lead in development.

8...a5 9 g5 ♘a6 10 h4 ♘ac5 11 ♗e3 f5

The wedge on g5 combined with the pressure on the e5-pawn have a cramping effect on Black's position. The text-move is a radical solution, but the exchanges it causes bring new worries soon.

12 gxf6 gxf6 13 0-0-0 ♔e8

Given that the d6-square represents a potential weakness, 13...♔c7 was an option to consider, but Black obviously felt the danger would come on the g-file.

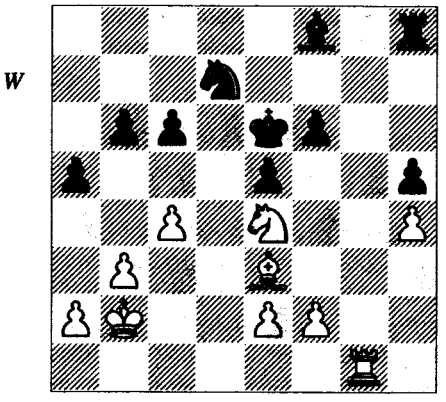
14 ♗h3 ♘b6 15 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 16 b3 h5?!

Preoccupied perhaps by the further advance of the h-pawn, which would make possible ♘h4-f5, Black invests an expensive tempo to prevent it. 16...♖g8, followed by ...♔f7, seems to me more natural.

17 ♖hg1 ♘bd7 18 ♘d2

White detects the weakness on d6.

18...♔f7 19 ♘de4 ♔e6 20 ♔b2 ♗e7 21 ♖g7 ♘xe4 22 ♘xe4 ♖cg8 23 ♖dg1 ♖xg7 24 ♖xg7 ♗f8 25 ♖g1 b6 *(D)*



Something had to be done against c5.

26 ♔c2 ♗e7 27 f3

Despite the exchanges, White's pressure continues owing to his better-posted pieces and potentially weak h5-pawn as well as the f5-square.

27...♔f7 28 ♗f2 f5?

When White played 27 f3 he had in mind the manoeuvre ♘g3-f5, fixing the weakness on f6. Therefore 28...♔e6 is better, so that 29 ♘g3 could be met by 29...f5. Ceding the g5-square allows simplifications into an endgame in which the white bishop is superior to the knight and the white rook to its counterpart, not to speak of the black pawns on dark squares. Vital space has been presented to White for free.

29 ♘g5+ ♗xg5

Or 29...♔f6 30 f4.

30 ♖xg5 f4 31 e3

Simple and strong: the following exchange will increase the scope of the bishop.

31...fxe3 32 ♗xe3 ♖h7

Gipslis proposed 32...♖g8 as better, while R.Marić thought 32...♔f6 was superior. However, Black is facing the fact that all the endgames to which play might simplify are difficult for him – a sure sign of serious trouble.

33 ♔d3 c5 34 ♗d2

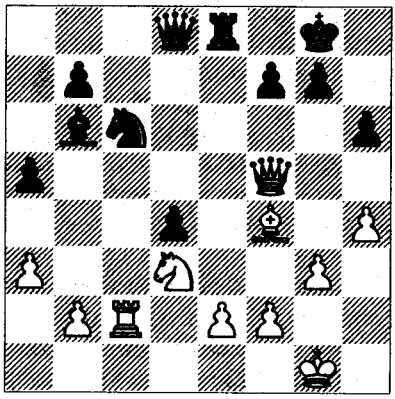
The black pawns on dark squares and the passive rook make it a relatively easy job for the mobile bishop and active rook.

34...♔f6 35 ♗c3 ♔e6 36 ♔e3 ♖h8 37 ♔e4 ♘f6+ 38 ♔d3 ♘d7 39 f4 ♖d8 40 fxe5 ♘f6+

40...♘xe5+ 41 ♔c2 would not have made much difference.

41 ♔c2 1-0

Inferior formations, bearing witness to opening misjudgements, are numerous and instructive. We shall examine some more of these.



W

Petrosian – Peters
Lone Pine 1976

White's superior pawn-structure and more active pieces against the compromised black formation (especially the b5-square) obviously favour him. However, it does not seem simple to take advantage of this.

30 ♔f1!

The exclamation mark goes for a deep, far-sighted positional plan begun by this simple move, whose aim is not just the overprotection of the e2-pawn.

30...♖e6

This is a difficult position to play with Black. Against the excellently posted white pieces stands an awkwardly placed black force. Especially worrying is the weakness of b5 and the unhappy dark-squared bishop on b6. Black decides that he cannot improve the position of his pieces and adopts a waiting stance, shuffling pieces to and fro. And indeed, attempts to play actively may backfire; for instance, after 30...♘e7 31 ♕b5 ♘g6, there is scope for little tactics, like 32 ♗c7 ♗xc7 33 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 34 ♕xe8+ ♘f8 (34...♔h7 35 ♕e4 costs Black a pawn) 35 ♘e5, simplifying into an advantageous endgame. However, on the evidence of the coming events, seeking the exchange of bishops by 30...♗c7 seems a better policy in spite of the difficulties which will continue to harass Black.

31 ♕b5 ♘a7 32 ♕b3 ♘c6

If 32...♖c6, then 33 ♘e5 ♖xc2 34 ♕xf7+ ♔h7 (34...♔h8? 35 ♘g6+ ♔h7 36 ♘f8+ ♔h8 37 ♗e5) 35 ♕g6+ and 36 ♕xc2.

33 h5

Controlling the g6-square and blocking the kingside pawns. White slowly turns the screw.

33...♘e7 34 ♔e1

We begin to understand what White wants: the time has come to transfer the king to b1 and to free the kingside pawns to advance. The utter simplicity by which Petrosian grasped the situation on the board and carried out his positional plans still fascinates me.

34...♘d5

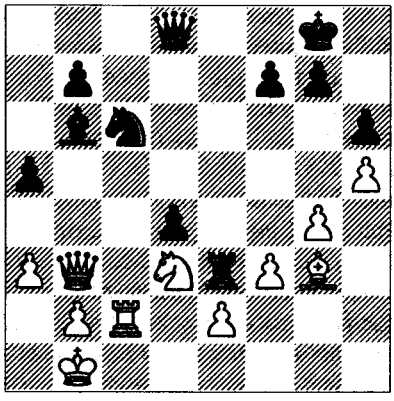
34...♕d5 35 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 36 ♖c8+ ♔h7 37 ♖b8 demonstrates clearly the kind of problems Black is facing. Simplification into a bad endgame hangs constantly over his head.

35 ♕b5

White is not particularly concerned about 35...♘xf4; the knight is superior to the bishop.

35...♘f6 36 ♔d1 ♘d5 37 ♗e5 ♘e7 38 g4 ♘c6 39 ♗g3 ♘a7 40 ♕b3 ♘c6 41 ♔c1 ♖e4 42 f3 ♖e3 43 ♔b1 *(D)*

B



43...♘e7?!

This makes White's job easier.

44 ♗h4! ♕d6 45 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 46 ♖c8+ ♔h7 47 ♖f8

A new weakness is felt, tying up the black pieces in a most uncomfortable situation.

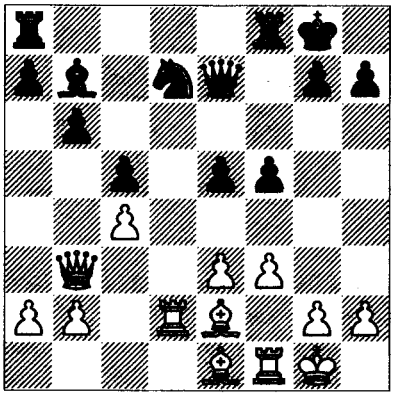
47...♕c7 48 f4 ♗c5?!

48...g6 is necessary.

49 ♕d5 ♖e5 50 ♖xf7 1-0

This game interested me enormously: it was vintage Petrosian. The strangling process was made possible by the king's transfer to the security of the queenside. Petrosian's patience and apparent slowness often had a lulling effect on his opponents. As if hypnotized, Peters floated helplessly down the stream.

B



Vidmar – Nimzowitsch
New York 1927

In this early middlegame position, White has just played 17 f3. It is not hard to see what he is after: the rook-lift with 17...♖f6 is prevented due to 18 ♗h4, and in case of the expected 17...♘f6, 18 ♗h4 makes it possible to double his rooks on the open d-file. However, Black has more space and freedom of movement and he does not hesitate to act at once...

17...g5! 18 ♗f2

18 ♖d1 ♘f6 19 ♗c3 came into consideration, but White put his hopes in his rooks and the open file.

18...♘f6 19 ♖fd1 ♖ae8

Nimzowitsch's assessment of the situation on the board differs. He could oppose rooks on the d-file, but he obviously thought he had no reason to worry about it.

20 ♕a4

After 20 a4 ♕g7 21 a5 g4 Black's counterplay is more dangerous.

20...♗a8 21 ♖d6

Taking into consideration that the pawn-structure is hostile to the white bishop-pair, 21 ♖d7 would get too little for the exchange.

21...♕g7 22 ♗f1?

At this critical moment when Black is ready to play ...g4 or ...e4, there is simply no time for hesitation. 22 ♔h1 would be effective against 22...g4, but 22...e4 is more difficult to meet. However, White could still activate his dark-squared bishop and avoid the worst: 22 ♗e1 g4 (but not 22...e4? 23 ♗c3 exf3 24 ♗xf6) 23 fxg4 ♘xg4 24 ♖d7 ♕g5 25 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 26 ♕c2 and White holds on (26...♗c6 27 ♖7d6 ♗f3 28 ♖1d2).

22...e4 23 ♗e1

23 fxe4 ♘xe4 24 ♖d7 ♕xb2 25 ♗e1 ♘c3 is not so pleasant. White is desperately looking for a saving chance.

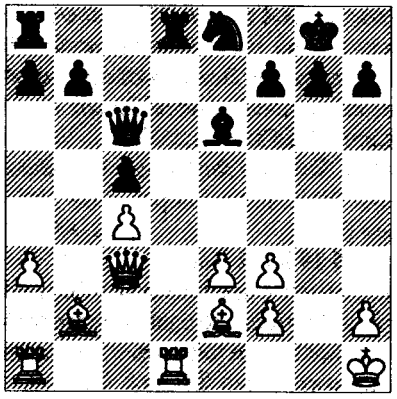
23...exf3 24 ♗c3 ♕e7

There was no time for 24...fxg2 25 ♗xg2 ♗xg2 due to 26 ♖xf6, but Black parries this tactical stroke by defending the e8-rook and threatening mate in case of the exchanges on f6. White is compelled to sound a retreat, and this signifies the final defeat of his concept.

25 ♖6d3 fxg2 26 ♗xg2 ♗xg2 27 ♗xf6 ♕e4 28 ♖1d2 ♗h3 29 ♗c3 ♕g4+ 0-1

In spite of the open central file dominated by White, the situation in the centre was stable enough for Black to expand on the kingside and

attack. An open central file also characterizes our next position, raising similar questions in the struggle for space and initiative.



Khalifman – Kramnik
Linares 2000

This early middlegame position presents a puzzle to White: should he oppose the opponent's rooks on the open d-file or perhaps surrender to the inviting charm of the semi-open g-file? In the first case he could continue 20 e4, planning 21 ♖d5, or perhaps 20 ♕c2 with the intention of 21 ♕e4. Relying on the bishop and queen lined up on the long diagonal, Khalifman chose the latter idea.

20 ♖g1?! f6 21 ♖g3 ♖d7 22 ♖ag1?!

It was suggested that White should have preferred 22 ♕c2 ♖ad8 23 ♗c3, postponing the rook move and keeping the bishop in a more active position, and we can go along with this.

22...♖ad8 23 ♗c1

On c1 the bishop is looking pathetic, and White has exchanged the d-file for the g-file. The first impression is that after the simple 20...f6 his pressure petered out, but the pressure exerted by Black on the abandoned d-file shows signs of increasing. For the time being ...♖d2 was not threatened (the g7-pawn would not be protected enough), but with the bishop having lost its impact on the long diagonal and lacking useful moves, White decides upon a preventive move.

23...♗f5!

By threatening 24...♗d3, which would open the road to the black rooks, Black provokes e4, creating another potential weakness – the hole on d4. At the same time the f5-bishop will withdraw to g6, closing the g-file to any sort of surprises.

24 e4 ♗g6 25 h4

The h-pawn remains the last hope to open the g-file by violent means. In response to the slow 25 ♗e3 Kramnik proposed 25...♘c7! 26 h4 ♘e6 when 27 h5 comes too late, as 27...♘d4 demonstrates.

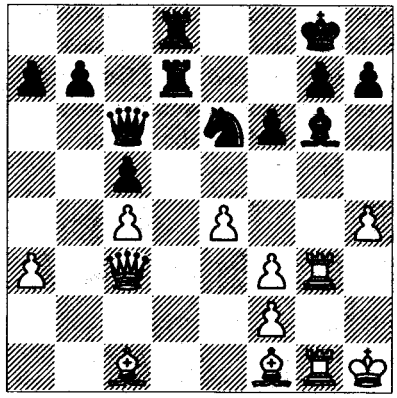
25...♘c7

Removing the black king from the g-file by 25...♔h8 could provoke 26 h5 ♗xh5 27 ♖h3 ♗f7 28 e5, increasing the pressure on the king. Therefore, unperturbed, Black carries out his plan: the powerful outpost on d4 will eliminate any meaningful threats to the king's position.

26 ♗f1?

In the meantime it is not clear how to proceed with the attack. 26 ♖h3 would be blocked by 26...♗h5 and with the king on g8 the sacrifice 26 h5 is pointless. Kramnik saw White's chances in the hidden 26 ♗h6! ♘e6 27 h5 ♗xh5 28 ♕xf6 ♗g6 29 ♖xg6 hxg6 30 ♖xg6. Although in my opinion Black will gradually repel White's pressure (for example: 30...♖e8 and now 31 ♗f1 ♖f7 32 ♕e5 ♕c7 or 31 ♕h4 ♖f7), it was the course to take.

26...♘e6 *(D)*



27 ♖h3

Probably White planned 27 ♗h3, but then decided that he could not allow 27...♖d3. Then 28 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 29 ♕a5 (or 29 ♕e1 ♗h5 30 ♖xg7+ ♔h8) 29...b6 (if now 29...♗h5 then 30 ♕c7) 30 ♕xa7 ♕c6 31 ♗f4 (or 31 ♕a6 ♖xf3) 31...♖3d7 32 ♕a6 ♗xe4 is clearly advantageous to Black, and so White gave up the idea.

27...♗h5 28 ♖hg3

Also 28 ♕xf6 ♖f8 29 ♕e5 ♗xf3+ 30 ♗g2 ♘d4 is objectively inadequate for White, but dragging the pieces to and fro cannot lead to anything better.

28...♔h8 29 ♕e3 ♘d4 30 ♗g2 ♖e8 31 ♖h3 ♕a4

White has been deprived of any counterplay and the queen's inroad will finish him off.

32 ♗f1 ♕d1 33 ♗g2 ♕c2 34 f4

34 ♗f1 now fails to 34...♘xf3 35 ♖xf3 ♖xe4, etc.

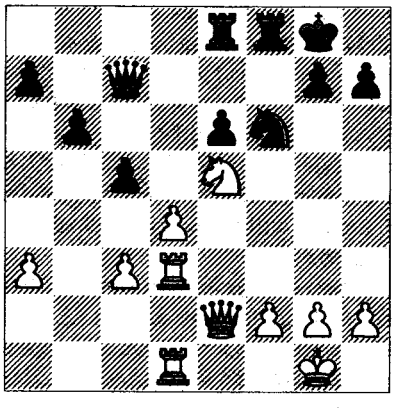
34...♘e2 35 ♖f1 ♖d1 0-1

Khalifman chose the wrong file: although it awakened illusions of attack, it offered less than the d-file which he abandoned to his adversary. Evaluating the strength and weakness of chess space, it's useful to repeat that we must stay aware of things real and things apparent, chess realities and chess appearances. To distinguish between them is essential but never an easy task; not even for such a strong grandmaster as Khalifman.

In a very instructive manner all these games witness the importance of spatial dominance, which always grows into other, more concrete forms of advantage, mostly into initiative with all its by-products.

Middlegame positions tending towards an endgame, usually with rooks and minor pieces, are no less sensitive to the command of space. On the contrary, the barer the board, the more the value of space seems to rise.

W



Krasenkow – Sakaev
Copenhagen 2003

21 c4

With this strong move, it is obvious that White is starting to turn the screw by limiting Black's options.

21...cxd4

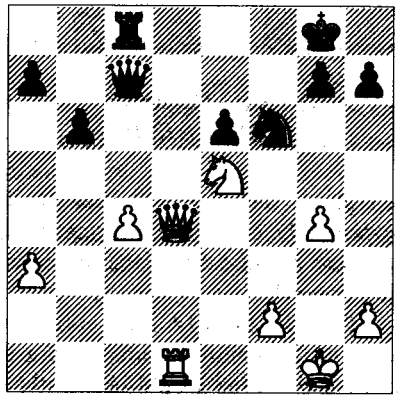
Black believes his best chance lies in further simplification towards an endgame, given that 21...♖d8 22 dxc5 bxc5 (if 22...♖xd3, then 23 ♘xd3) 23 f4 favours White.

22 ♖xd4 ♖d8 23 ♕e3 ♖xd4 24 ♕xd4 ♖c8

On 24...♕c5 there is 25 ♕xc5 bxc5 26 ♖d6, when 26...♖b8 is met by 27 f3, while 26...♘e4 fails to 27 ♖xe6 ♘xf2 28 ♘d7 ♖d8 29 ♖d6 ♘e4 30 ♘f6+, winning material. Thus Black could do nothing against White's mighty centralized knight and dominance of the open file. To aggravate things comes a powerful continuation...

25 g4! *(D)*

B



Having forced Black into tame waiting measures, it's time for White to accentuate his spatial superiority by means of a kingside pawn advance.

25...h6 26 h4 ♕c5

Waiting further could hardly be of any avail; the queen exchange looks necessary.

27 g5 hxg5 28 hxg5 ♕xd4

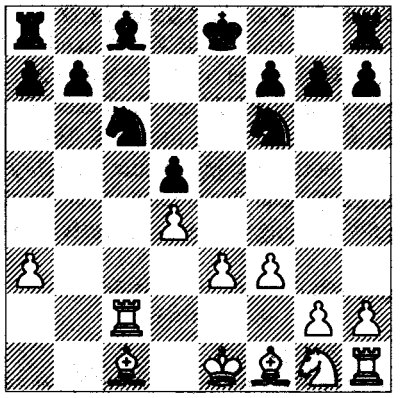
If 28...♘h5, then 29 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 (29...bxc5 is pointless) 30 g6 ♖c8 31 ♖d7, etc.

29 ♖xd4 ♘h5 30 ♔g2

The knight on h5 is stranded out of play, the king on the back rank is in a mating-net, and the rook is on a short leash. All White has to do is to move the king to e4, freeing the d4-rook to penetrate. 30...♖f8 cannot prevent the plan due to 31 ♘g6 ♖e8 32 ♔f3 ♔h7 (or 32...e5 33

♖e4) 33 ♘e5 ♖f8+ 34 ♔g4; 30...♔f8 would fail to 31 ♖h4; after 30...♖c5 31 g6 ♖c8 32 ♖d7 Black loses material in unfavourable conditions. White's large space advantage was transformed into a kingside initiative which in turn yielded very palpable results. Black is lost.

B



Kotov – Pachman
Saltsjöbaden IZ 1948

A couple of moves earlier Black inadvertently opened the c-file and exchanged queens at c2. It was a colossal strategic mistake. We shall soon see why...

12...♗f5 13 ♖b2 0-0 14 ♗d2

Taking on b7 naturally never occurred to Kotov; 14 ♖xb7 ♖fb8 would be exactly what Black needs.

14...♖fe8 15 ♔f2 ♖e7 16 g4!

Expanding on the kingside is a natural consequence of the mobile kingside pawn-majority. In comparison, the black queenside majority is lame. The centre of gravity, therefore, is logically transferred in harmony with the superior white force.

16...♗g6 17 h4 h6 18 ♘h3

Black's formation contains a weak point – the d5-pawn.

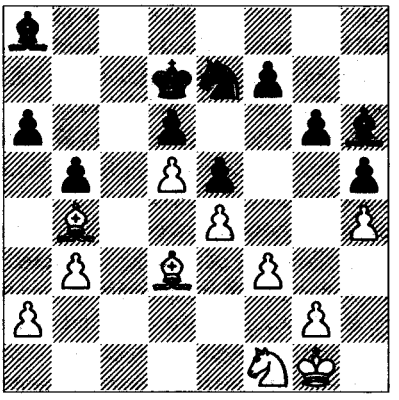
18...♖d8 19 ♘f4 ♗h7 20 g5 ♘e8 21 ♖b5 hxg5 22 hxg5 ♘c7

Unfortunately, 22...♖ed7 is to no avail due to 23 ♗h3 a6, when White can choose between 24 ♗xd7 axb5 25 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 26 ♖c1 winning material, or the slower but paralysing 24 ♖b6 ♖c7 25 ♖c1.

23 ♖xb7 ♘e6 24 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 25 ♘xe6 fxe6 26 ♗b4 ♘c6 27 ♗c5 ♖b8 28 ♗h3 ♗f5 29 ♗xf5 exf5 30 g6

and the struggle was practically over.

W



Smyslov – Euwe
The Hague/Moscow Wch 1948

The side with a spatial advantage has more space in which to manoeuvre than his opponent. This means he can expect greater piece activity, while the opponent finds his possibilities restricted. Sometimes, as in this case, the advantage is huge and striking.

41 g4!

The first step is to safeguard the space advantage by preventing 41...f5.

41...hxg4

After 41...♗f4 42 g5 there is no time for undermining the cramping g5-pawn by 42...♘g8, due to 43 a4 bxa4 44 bxa4 ♗b7 45 ♘d2 f6 46 ♘c4; the queenside pawns are weak. 42...♘c8 is somewhat better, but after 43 ♗a5 (it's best to rule out ...♘b6 at once) 43...♗c1 44 a4 bxa4 45 bxa4 ♗b7 it is not difficult to imagine two simple manoeuvres – ♘d2-c4 and ♗f1-h3. If the dark-squared bishop is exchanged for the knight, then f4 will break the blockade.

42 fxg4 ♗c1

The bishop sails to warmer waters; otherwise after 42...f6 43 g5 fxg5 44 ♗d2 or 42...f5 43 g5 ♗g7 44 ♘e3 it would be frozen in its corner.

43 g5 ♗b7 44 ♔f2 ♘c8

The attempt to free the pieces by 44...♘g8 fails to 45 ♘g3 f6 46 ♘e2 and the bishop is trapped.

45 ♘e3 ♔e7 46 ♗a5 ♗a3 47 ♔g3 ♗c5 48 ♗d2 ♔f8

Keres pointed out 48...♘b6 49 h5! gxh5 50 ♘f5+ ♔d7 51 ♗e2. The side which dominates in space freely moves its pieces from one wing to the other.

49 ♘c2 ♔e7

Or 49...♘e7 50 ♗a5 ♘c8 (if 50...♗c8 then 51 b4 ♗a7 52 ♗c7 wins) 51 ♗e2.

50 ♗e2 ♘a7?!

50...♘b6 is somewhat better. Then White had in mind 51 h5 gxh5 52 ♔h4 ♘d7 53 ♔xh5 ♘f8 54 ♗g4 excluding the light-squared bishop from the battlefield.

51 ♗a5 ♘c8

The unfortunate bishop cannot move from b7 because of 51...♗c8 52 b4 ♗g1 53 ♔g2, etc.

52 ♗g4 f6

Black has been reduced almost to the state of zugzwang. Thus 52...♔e8 loses to 53 ♗c7 ♔e7 54 ♔g2 ♗a7 55 ♘b4 ♗c5 56 ♘c6+, etc.

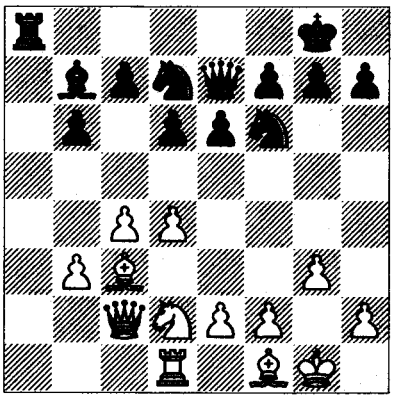
53 ♗e6 fxg5 54 hxg5 ♘b6

54...♔e8 55 ♗c7 ♔e7 56 ♔f3 leads to zugzwang.

55 b4 ♘c4 56 bxc5 ♘xa5 57 cxd6+ ♔xd6 58 ♗f7 ♘c4 59 ♗xg6

and White sailed safely into winning waters.

B



P. Nikolić – Christjansson
Selfoss 2002

Black has to make a major decision: either to play 19...d5, opposing White's aim to build up a full pawn-centre, or to choose the routine continuation in such positions – 19...e5. He opted for the latter, allowing the centre to become blocked, and found himself in a somewhat cramped position.

19...e5 20 d5

Hoping to free his game by exchanges, Black now continued...

20...b5?! 21 e4 bxc4 22 ♘xc4!

When considering his 20th move, Black probably expected 22 bxc4, when 22...c6 simplifies the position as he wished. By taking with the knight, White prevents simplifications and creates the preconditions for a superior endgame: by moving the knight to a5 he will control the strong c6-square and fix the backward pawn on c7. His spatial advantage is in the making.

22...♘c5 23 ♗g2

23 f3 ♗a6 would eventually lead to the exchange of the light-squared bishops, which is not in the frame of White's plans.

23...♗a6 24 ♘a5 ♕e8 25 b4 ♕a4 26 ♕xa4 ♘xa4 27 ♗d2 ♔f8 28 f3 ♗b5 29 ♖c1 ♘e8 30 h4

Having taken a strong grip on the queenside, White can afford to seize space slowly and methodically on the kingside as well. We enter the type of position we have been analysing in the previous games.

30...♘b6 31 ♔f2

The immediate 31 g4 is a more precise move-order. This prevents ...f5 and so denies Black any alternative to the gruelling game continuation.

31...♘c8 32 g4 ♖a7 33 g5 ♖a8 34 h5 ♘e7 35 ♗h3 ♖b8 36 ♔g3

The immediate 36 f4 comes into consideration.

36...♖a8

Bereft of counterplay, Black can only wait patiently. However, the rook stands well on the b-file, keeping an eye on the b4-pawn. After 36...♖b6, for instance, 37 f4 could be met by 37...♗d3 38 ♖e1 (or 38 ♔f3 f5) 38...f5, when the passive position awakens.

37 f4 exf4+

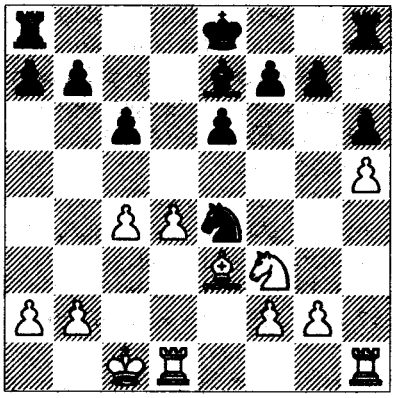
37...♗d3 38 ♖e1 f5 should be considered again; for example, 39 ♗xf5 ♘xf5+ 40 exf5 ♗xf5 41 fxe5 dxe5 42 ♖xe5 ♘d6 costs Black a pawn, but in this simplified position his pieces come to life.

38 ♗xf4 ♘g8?

Cramped on his back ranks and facing a long difficult defence, Black is in low spirits. He

could continue to wait with 38...♖b8 or even consider once again the bold 38...f5. Instead, he plays a losing move. Apart from the slow strangling game continuation (39 h6), there was now a tactical solution in 39 ♖xc7! ♘xc7 40 ♗xd6+ ♔e8 41 ♗xc7 with an overwhelming advantage.

B



Kramnik – Bareev
Wijk aan Zee 2002

Queens and numerous pieces have been exchanged and the peaceful scene may play a trick on the superficial onlooker. In spite of its apparent simplicity the position is difficult for Black. He is a step behind in development and has no clear plans. White, on the contrary, can think of ♘e5 followed by a pawn advance on the kingside, which would gradually increase his spatial advantage. The knight on e5 is a crucial part of the plan and Black's defence should concentrate on it at once. With that in mind it is easy to conclude that the symmetrical 18...0-0-0?! just invites 19 ♘e5 and Black must seek other options.

18...♘d6?!

The further course of the game demonstrates that the pressure on c4 does not force White to give in and continue c5. On the other hand, f5 as its next stop is not appealing – the pressure exerted on the d4-pawn is feeble, the exchange at e3 would be avoided, while the knight would be expelled with tempo the very next move. If we add that Black must take into consideration the central breakthrough as well, then 18...♘f6 looks more natural, all the more so because the d7-square would be at hand in the fight against a dominant e5-knight.

19 b3 ♗f6 20 g4

In view of what is coming, it is useful to place the f5-square under surveillance, but the advance is also part of a larger strategic plan – gaining a spatial advantage on the kingside.

20...b5 21 ♘d2

Not, of course, 21 c5, relinquishing the central d5-square to the knight.

21...♔d7?!

The king is exposed on d7. 21...0-0-0 looks more natural.

22 ♔c2 ♗d8?!

In anticipation of the pawn advance the bishop retreats, but it takes time to carry out g5 and the retreat seems somewhat hasty, if not panicky.

23 ♘f3 ♗f6

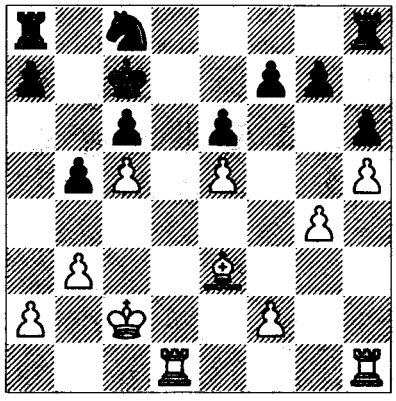
The obvious 23...f6 does not stop 24 ♘e5+.

24 ♘e5+ ♔c7 25 c5

Now that the knight's retreat is not possible without first exchanging on e5, the text-move forces a simpler endgame where White has an enhanced space advantage.

25...♗xe5 26 dxe5 ♘c8 *(D)*

W



27 ♖h3!

Before the knight can reach d5, the king's rook gets an important assignment. By moving along the third rank, to f3 or d3, it will make use of the spatial dominance in a very effective manner.

27...♘e7 28 ♖f3 ♖hf8

If 28...♖af8, then 29 ♖d6 ♘d5 30 ♗d2 and the menace comes from a5.

29 ♖d6 a5

29...♘d5 30 ♗d2 does not change the nature of the position. Unfortunately, fighting against the outpost by 29...♘c8 is counterproductive due to 30 ♖d4 followed by 31 ♖df4.

30 g5

The time has come to use the huge space at White's disposal and transform it into a new, more palpable form of advantage.

30...hxg5

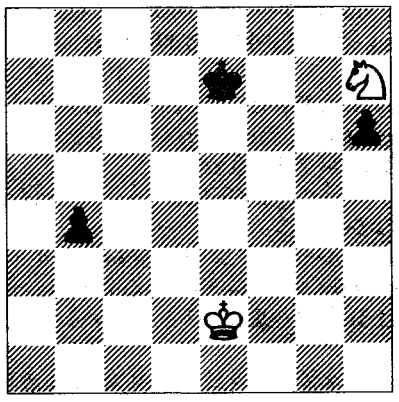
On 30...♘f5 the champion had in mind 31 gxh6 gxh6 32 ♖xf5! exf5 33 ♖xh6 ♖ae8 34 ♖f6 with a clear advantage.

31 ♗xg5 ♘f5 32 ♖d1 a4 33 b4

Facing the inevitable 34 ♖fd3, Black can do nothing against the decisive penetration of a rook to the seventh rank with all its damaging consequences; 33...f6 34 ♗f4 would not be very helpful.

When material becomes scarce and the board looks empty, one would expect space to be a less valuable commodity. It may look strange at first sight, but the importance of a spatial advantage does not lessen; on the contrary! To acquaint ourselves fully with this, we shall look into the extreme cases shown in studies, where material has been reduced to its minimum. We shall see that pieces thrive in wide-open spaces; especially those that reach distant targets, i.e. the major pieces and bishops, but also the apparently lame knight. A couple of examples will help to see what a dextrous piece the knight can be, if no barriers stand in its way.

W



Grigoriev
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1932
White to play and draw

The white king is in the square of the b-pawn, but how can White control the h-pawn?

1 ♔d3 ♔f7 2 ♔c4 ♔g6

2...♔g7 is obviously too slow because of 3 ♔xb4.

3 ♘f8+

3 ♔xb4? loses after 3...h5!.

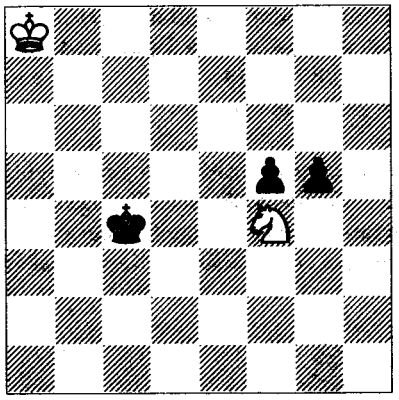
3...♔f5

With the knight expelled to the queenside, it seems that the h-pawn can run freely and reach the promotion square, but the light-footed knight enters the scene!

4 ♘d7 h5 5 ♘c5! h4 6 ♘b3! h3 7 ♘d2 h2 8 ♘f1

Just in time to prevent promotion to a major piece.

W



Chekhover (end of a study)
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1947
White to play and draw

The white king is in a distant corner, and the task of the lonely knight in controlling the connected passed pawns seems an impossible mission. However, on an empty board the knight can be devilish.

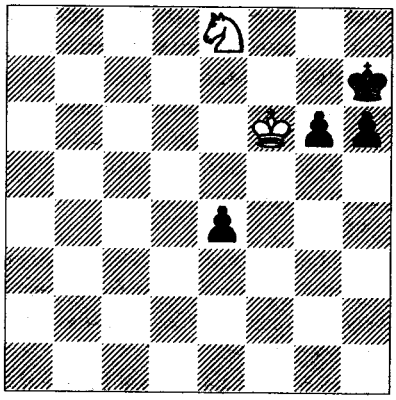
1 ♘e6! g4 2 ♘g7! f4 3 ♘h5!

The knight chases the pawns forward, where they aspire to go, but ironically, the nearer to the promotion square, the more vulnerable they get. It's the king's geometrical position that tells against them.

3...f3 4 ♘f6! g3 5 ♘e4! g2 6 ♘d2+

Draw. The position of the enemy king is often the saving straw that the nimble knight will grasp.

W

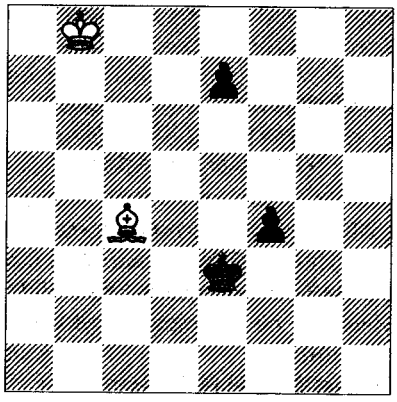


Selezniev
Shakhmatny Listok, 1930
White to play and draw

Another mission impossible, yet...
1 ♔f7 e3 2 ♘f6+ ♔h8 3 ♘d5 e2 4 ♘f4 e1♕ 5 ♘xg6+ ♔h7 6 ♘f8+
with perpetual check.

On an empty board even the knight runs quickly, covering unexpectedly large distances. To the far-reaching bishop it comes more naturally, unless, of course, barriers stand in the way.

W



Grigoriev
Izvestia, 1927
White to play and draw

Taking into consideration the position of the kings, one would be prone to conclude that Black wins without effort. And indeed, after 1 ♔c7? e5 2 ♔d6 ♔d4! the white king is kept at bay and the pawns are unstoppable. However, by losing a tempo, White manages to stop them:

1 ♗e6! f3 2 ♔c7 f2 3 ♗h3

3 ♗c4? does not work due to 3...e5 4 ♔d6 e4 5 ♔e5 ♔f3 6 ♔d4 e3, etc., but after the text-move 3...e5 is insufficient because of 4 ♔d6 ♔d4 5 ♔e6 e4 6 ♔f5 e3 7 ♗f1 and the king will reach f3 in time.

3...♔f3 4 ♔c6 e5 5 ♔d5 e4 6 ♔d4 e3 7 ♔d3 e2 8 ♗g4+!

The bishop held back the pawn advance and now its sacrifice prevents the worst.

8...♔xg4 9 ♔xe2 ♔g3 10 ♔f1 ♔f3 stalemate

The light-footed bishop reaches everywhere in time. All it needs are free diagonals.

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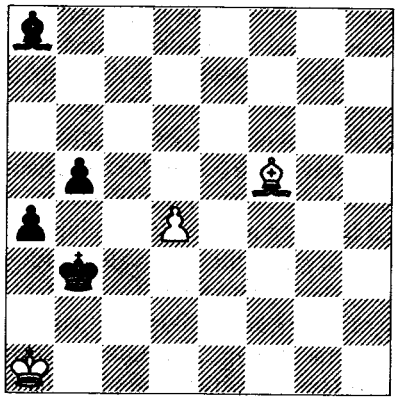


Mikhailov
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1950
White to play and draw

Here, too, White's situation seems hopeless, but the bishop's prowess saves the game.

1 ♗d3 b4 2 d5! ♗xd5

If 2...♔c3 then 3 d6 ♗c6 4 ♗f5 b3 5 d7, etc.

3 ♗c2+! ♔a3

Unfortunately, 3...♔c3 4 ♗xa4 ♗e4, which is apparently winning, finds a cunning response in 5 ♗b3! ♗c2 6 ♗e6 ♗b3 7 ♗d7 ♗c4 8 ♗a4, etc.

4 ♗e4! ♗g8 5 ♗h7! ♗a2 6 ♗c2! ♗b3

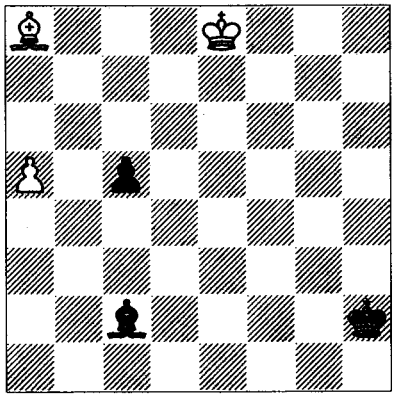
6...b3 7 ♗xb3 leads nowhere.

7 ♗e4 ♗d1 8 ♗c2!

Draw. 8...♗g4 9 ♗f5 ♗h5 10 ♗g6 finishes in a perpetual attack.

The singular combination of the king's impotence and the bishop's mobility, enhanced by the pawn sacrifice, made real what seemed impossible.

W



Troitsky
28 Rijen, 1925
White to play and win

White is a move nearer to the promotion square, but Black can gain a tempo with a check from a4 or g6, and so a draw seems inevitable. However, things are more complex than that.

1 a6 c4 2 a7 c3 3 ♗h1!

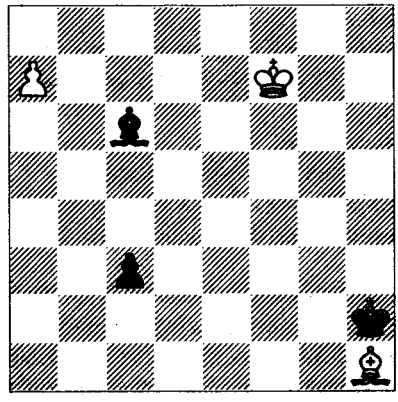
The first sign of trouble: after 3...♗g6+ 4 ♔e7 c2 5 a8♕ White threatens mate next move. It's only in the endgame that one can make such long moves across the whole board.

3...♗a4+ 4 ♔f7!

We shall see why this is the only square whence the king takes part in the mating attack

4...♗c6! *(D)*

W



The only measure against the imminent mating threats, but it turns out to be insufficient.

5 ♗xc6 c2 6 a8♕ c1♕ 7 ♕a2+

Like the bishop, the queen acquires additional mobility in open space.

7...♔g3 8 ♕g2+

The king is caught in the mating web and cannot run away.

8...♔f4

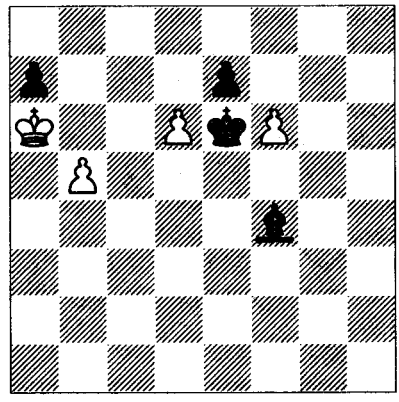
Or 8...♔h4 9 ♕f2+ ♔g4 (or 9...♔h5 10 ♗f3+ ♔g5 11 ♕g3+ ♔f5 12 ♕g6+, etc.) 10 ♗d7+ ♔h5 11 ♕f3+, etc.

9 ♕f3+ ♔g5 10 ♕g3+ ♔f5 11 ♕g6+ ♔f4 12 ♕h6+

White wins the queen.

In these examples we owe the nimble actions of mobile bishops to open space. As soon as some sort of restrictions are imposed on their mobility, some little details start to spoil their efficacy.

W



Zakhodiakhin
Shakhmatny Listok, 1930
White to play and win

1 f7!

1 d7?? even loses to 1...♔xd7 2 f7 ♗h6, while 1 dxe7? ♔f7 2 ♔xa7 ♗e5 is too slow.

1...♔xf7 2 b6!

In order to promote a pawn, a barrier must be built so that the free movement of the bishop is limited.

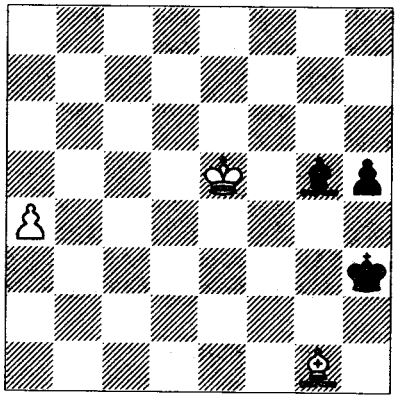
2...axb6 3 d7 ♗c7 4 ♔b7 ♗d8 5 ♔c8

and White wins.

The sacrifice of the second pawn shortened the a5-d8 diagonal, which affected the bishop.

More often, however, restrictions are imposed by threats to the king.

W



Troitsky
Neuburger Wochenschach, 1913
White to play and win

Black is handicapped not only because White is a step nearer to the promotion square, but because his bishop needs to overcome several barriers if it is to halt the advancing pawn.

1 a5 ♗h4

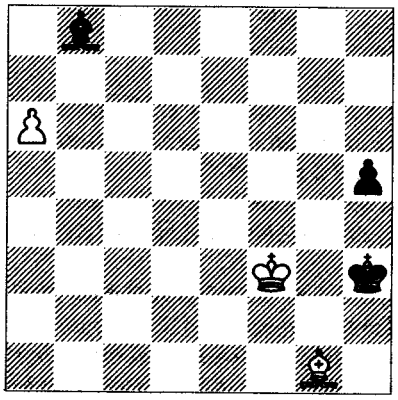
1...♗d8 fails to 2 ♗b6 (after 2 a6 ♗c7+, 3 ♔d5? ♗b8 4 ♔c6 ♔g2 5 ♔b7 ♔xg1 6 ♔xb8 h4 leads to a drawn pawn ending, but 3 ♔e4! ♗b8 transposes to the main line), while 1...♔g3 is insufficient due to 2 ♔f5 ♗f4 3 ♗h2+. 1...♔g4 does not work because of 2 a6 ♗f4+ 3 ♔d5! ♗b8 4 ♔c6.

2 a6 ♗g3+ 3 ♔e4

Now it would be too slow to try to reach b7, but new favourable circumstances arise...

3...♗b8 4 ♔f3! *(D)*

B



The black bishop has reached the desired destination, but the king has fallen into a zugzwang trap: 4...h4 loses to 5 ♗f2 ♔h2 6 ♗xh4 ♔h3 7 ♗f2 ♔h2 8 ♔e4 ♔g2 9 ♗c5, etc.

4...♔h4 5 ♗e3!

There is an alternative win by 5 ♗h2! ♗a7 6 ♗f4 ♔h3 7 ♗g3 h4 (7...♗b6 8 ♗f2) 8 ♗f2 ♗b8 9 ♗g1 with zugzwang.

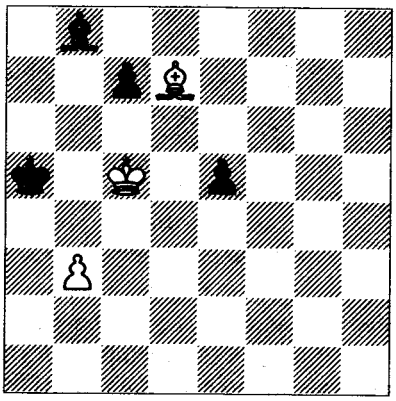
5...♔h3 6 ♗f2 ♔h2

If 6...h4, then 7 ♗g1.

7 ♗g3+

and White wins.

W



Gorgiev
Shakhmaty, 1935
White to play and win

1 b4+!

Two details tell against Black: his bishop is closed in and his king's movement is limited on the edge of the board.

1...♔a6 2 ♔c6

White must keep Black's pieces hemmed in.

2...e4

2...♔a7 3 ♗f5 comes to the same thing.

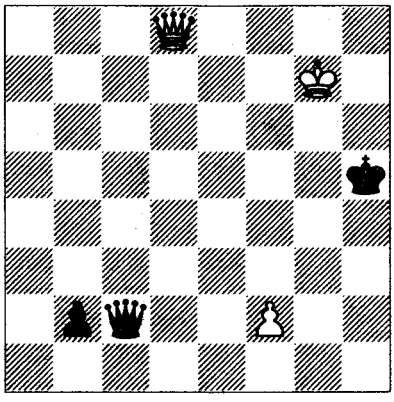
3 ♗e6! e3 4 ♗c4+ ♔a7 5 b5 ♔a8 6 ♗d5 ♔a7

Or 6...e2 7 b6!.

7 ♗f3 ♔a8 8 b6 cxb6 9 ♔xb6#

After each move Black's space was shrinking until it diminished to the mouse hole at a8.

The bishop makes splendid use of open diagonals, but with the queen everything is quicker, further and mightier. A number of memorable studies will remind us of its power and mobility.



Rinck
Basler Nachrichten, 1938
White to play and win

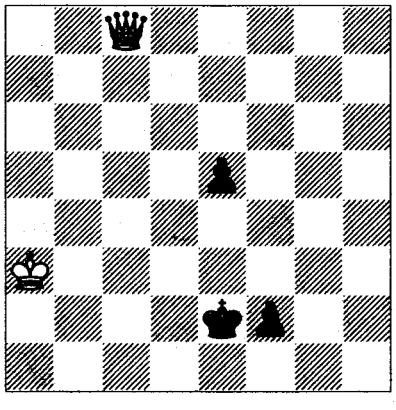
The far-advanced black pawn seems to forebode difficulties for White, but soon the mobile white queen decides the issue by a quick succession of checks.

1 ♕d5+! ♔h4 2 ♕h1+ ♔g4 3 ♕g2+ ♔h5

3...♔f4 costs Black his queen after 4 ♕g3+ ♔e4 5 ♕g6+.

4 ♕h2+ ♔g5 5 f4+

and the queen is gone.



Chekhover
1936
White to play and win

Given the position of the white king, the f-pawn advanced to its seventh rank would be enough to draw on its own, but the existence of the additional e-pawn spoils his prospects.

1 ♕c4+ ♔e1 2 ♕e4+ ♔d2 3 ♕f3 ♔e1 4 ♕e3+ ♔f1 5 ♕e4!

If 5 ♔b3?, then 5...e4! 6 ♔c2 ♔g2 and having lost the vital f3-square, White will have to let his opponent squeeze out of his predicament due to stalemate (7 ♕xe4+ ♔g1 8 ♕g4+ ♔h1 9 ♕f3+ ♔g1 10 ♕g3+ ♔h1) and to the fact that the white king is still too far away.

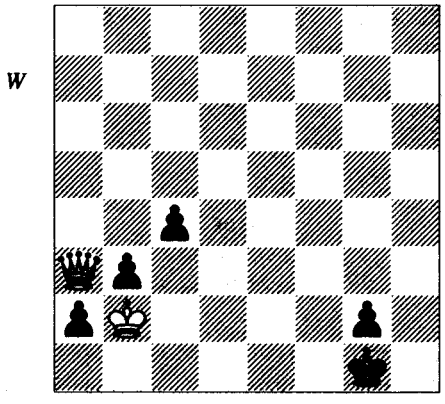
5...♔g1 6 ♕g4+ ♔h2 7 ♕f3! ♔g1 8 ♕g3+ ♔f1 9 ♔b3 ♔e2

9...e4 is now to no avail because of 10 ♔c2: 10...e3 11 ♔d3 or 10...♔e2 11 ♕g4+, etc.

10 ♕g2 ♔e1 11 ♕e4+ ♔d2 12 ♕f3 ♔e1 13 ♕e3+ ♔f1 14 ♕e4!

and the cycle of checks is repeated, each time winning a tempo for the approaching king.

The following study is more demanding: the queen keeps no fewer than four pawns under control, including the critical c-pawn.



Horwitz and Kling
Chess Studies, 1851
White to play and win

1 ♕c5+ ♔h2

In case of 1...♔h1 2 ♕h5+ ♔g1 3 ♕h3 ♔f2 4 ♕h4+ ♔f3 5 ♕e1 ♔g4 6 ♕f2 ♔h3 7 ♔a1 c3 8 ♕e3+ ♔g4 9 ♕d4+ ♔g5 10 ♕d5+ the crucial pawn falls.

2 ♕e5+ ♔h3

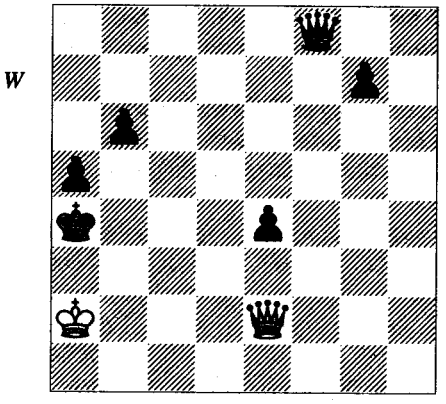
Or 2...♔g1 3 ♕d4+ ♔h2 4 ♕h4+, etc.

3 ♕e1! ♔g4 4 ♕f2! c3+ 5 ♔a1 ♔h3 6 ♕e3+ ♔h2 7 ♕e5+! ♔h1 8 ♕h8+

When the board is empty, all the corners of the board are at the queen's disposal. Long moves often characterize its movement.

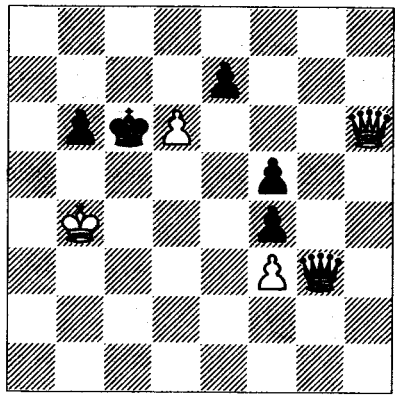
8...♔g1 9 ♕xc3 ♔f2 10 ♕d2+ ♔f3
Or 10...♔f1 11 ♕f4+ ♔e2 12 ♕g3 ♔f1 13 ♕f3+ ♔g1 14 ♕xb3, etc.
11 ♕e1 ♔g4 12 ♔b2
and Black's pawns drop.

This queen thrives in open space. However, many a time its movement is limited either by barriers or the opponent's mating threats. In endgames where each side has a queen, one of them is usually powerful, while the other has limited activity. Its inferiority is often due to the lack of available space.



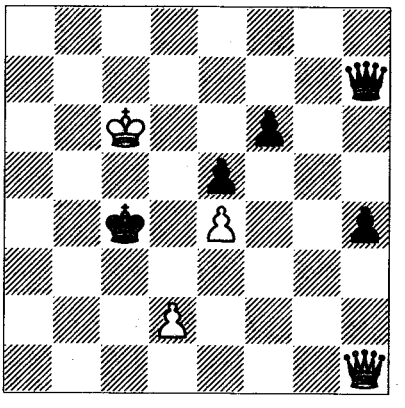
Prokeš
Šach, 1943
White to play and win

Again the theme is the unfavourable position of the black king on the edge of the chessboard. In spite of Black's large material advantage, his king's lack of living space leads to a sudden demise:
1 ♕c4+ ♕b4 2 ♕c6+ ♕b5 3 ♕xe4+ ♕b4 4 ♕d3!
Black is almost paralysed. Due to mating threats only the g-pawn can move.
4...g6 5 ♕d7+ ♕b5 6 ♕d4+ ♕b4 7 ♕d3!
A new cycle of checks begins. The purpose is to force the g-pawn to advance to a square where it may be captured with check.
7...g5 8 ♕d7+ ♕b5 9 ♕d4+ ♕b4 10 ♕d3 g4
Now the g-pawn is on a vulnerable square and White can win it with tempo.
11 ♕d7+ ♕b5 12 ♕xg4+ ♕b4 13 ♕d7+ ♕b5 14 ♕d4+ ♕b4 15 ♕d3!
Black has been forced into zugzwang.



Kubbel
Shakhmatny Listok, 1928
White to play and win

Owing to the fact that the black queen is temporarily out of play, White can set a mating-net:
1 ♕e6!
By threatening the decisive 2 dxe7+ White restricts Black's choice to forced replies.
1...exd6 2 ♕c8+ ♔d5 3 ♕xf5+ ♔c6 4 ♕c8+ ♔d5 5 ♕e8!
There is no defence against 6 ♕e4#, because 5...♕xf3 loses to 6 ♕a8+.



Rinck
Bohemia, 1906
White to play and win

Although the black king is in the middle of the board and Black is materially superior, a mating attack crowns the harmonious position of the white pieces and the queen's mobility:

1 ♕b1!

White threatens no less than mate in two, so the black queen is frozen on h7 for one more move.

1...♔d4 2 ♕b3!!

A beautiful solution. White renews the threat of mate in two but allows the black queen to join the battle and, what's more, with check.

2...♕xe4+ 3 ♔d6! ♕a8

The only response.

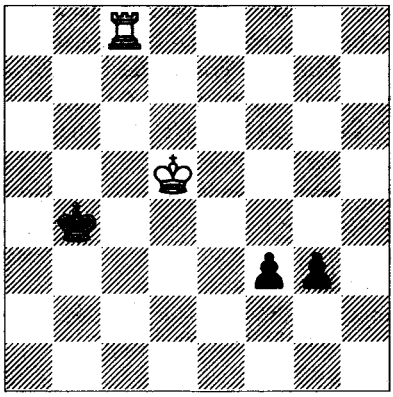
4 ♕e3+ ♔c4 5 ♕c3+ ♔b5 6 ♕b3+ ♔a6 7 ♕a4+ ♔b7 8 ♕b5+ ♔a7 9 ♔c7!

and Black is trapped.

Endgame studies share with combinations a forcing character. Move after move the original threat is renewed or new ones introduced. Threats keep the hands of the inferior side tied while the winning procedure is in progress. What's more, the weaker side is often compelled to cooperate and dance to the opponent's tune against his will. Attack and defence meet in a chess study in full harmony. It is to that harmony that we owe its appeal and our fascination with it.

As far as our subject is concerned, owing to its neat forms and minimal conditions the study emphasizes in the best manner possible the strong dependence of material on the width and freedom of space. Studies as well as practical endgames involving the rook are exceptionally instructive and illustrative in that respect too.

W



Wotava
Schach-Magazin, 1950
White to play and draw

White's case looks hopeless, but a splendid white rook in close cooperation with the king succeeds in keeping the pawns at bay:

1 ♖c4+!!

Other moves obviously do not help, but the restrictive check defines some new relations on the board.

1...♔b3

1...♔b5 gets Black nowhere: 2 ♖c1 g2 3 ♖b1+ ♔a4 4 ♔c4 ♔a3 5 ♔c3 ♔a4 (5...♔a2? 6 ♖g1!) 6 ♔c4 with a draw.

2 ♖f4

2 ♖g4? makes a huge negative difference; after 2...g2 3 ♔c5 ♔c3 (3...f2 4 ♖g3+ ♔a4 5 ♖g4+) 4 ♖g8 ♔d2 5 ♔d4 ♔e1 the pawns cannot be stopped.

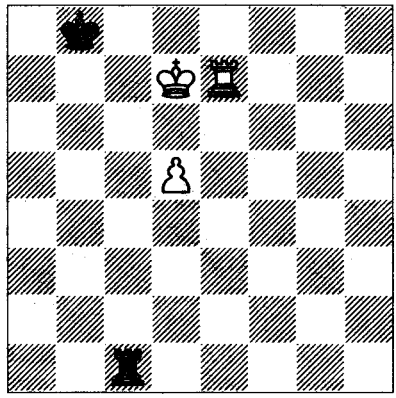
2...f2 3 ♔c5 g2

3...♔c2 4 ♔d4 ♔d2 5 ♖f3! ♔e2 6 ♖e3+ is also a draw.

4 ♖f3+ ♔a4 5 ♖f4+ ♔a5 6 ♖f3 ♔a6 7 ♔c6 ♔a7 8 ♖f7+ ♔b8 9 ♖f8+

With a draw.

B



Kopaev (end of study)
1955
Black to play; White wins

The choice of the first move in this difficult position is rather obvious. Given that 1...♖c7+ serves White and that 1...♔b7 2 ♔d8+ ♔b8 (or 2...♔b6 3 ♖e6+) 3 d6 ♖c8+ 4 ♔d7 ♖c1 5 ♖e2 decides quickly, there is but one possibility:

1...♖h1 2 ♖e2

2 d6? would fail to 2...♔b7 3 ♔d8+ ♔c6 4 d7 ♔d6.

2...♖h7+ 3 ♔c6 ♖c7+ 4 ♔d6 ♖c1 5 ♖h2!

Finally White catches a moment to improve the position of the rook. On the tempting 5 ♖e8+? ♔b7 6 ♔e7 there is 6...♖h1.

5...♔b7

The attempt to achieve the Lasker position by 5...♖d1 does not work because of 6 ♔c6 (not 6 ♔e6? ♔c8) 6...♖c1+ 7 ♔d7 ♖c7+ 8 ♔e6 ♖g7 9 ♖h8+ ♔b7 10 d6, reaching a theoretical win.

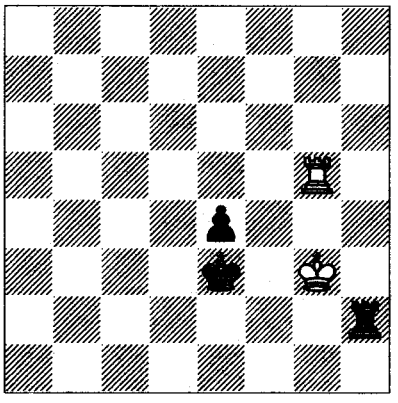
6 ♖h7+ ♔b6 7 ♖h8! ♔b7 8 ♔d7 ♖c7+ 9 ♔e6 ♖g7 10 d6

and White wins.

From these and similar examples it is obvious that aims get realized only through maximum mobility of the rook and maximum coordination with the king.

Practical endgames are neither so neat nor beautiful, but all the concrete values are no less related to spatial advantage or lack of space. A couple of tournament endgames will throw more light on the relations between the rook and the space at its disposal.

B



Javelle – Griessmann
1952

Where to move the rook? One is tempted to transfer it to the other wing, keeping the white king cut off along the second rank. However, 1...♖a2? 2 ♖e5! ♖a8 (or 2...♔d3 3 ♔f4 ♖f2+ 4 ♔g3 ♖f8 5 ♖a5) 3 ♔g2 ♔d3 4 ♔f2 leads to a theoretical draw. 1...♖h1? is no better: 2 ♔g2 ♖a1 3 ♖e5 ♔d3 4 ♔f2. Black, therefore, chose a devious path:

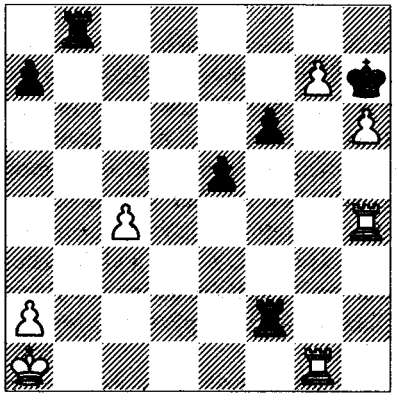
1...♖h8 2 ♖g6 ♖a8!

The rook goes around the board to realize its maximum potential; meanwhile the white rook must stay on the g-file to avoid its king from being cut off one more file further from the pawn. Note that 2...♔e2? is premature due to 3 ♖a6, and that 2...♖b8? 3 ♖g7 ♖b1 fails to achieve results because of 4 ♔g2 ♔e2 5 ♖a7 e3 6 ♖a2+ and we are in a theoretical draw.

3 ♖g7 ♖a1 4 ♔g2 ♔e2 5 ♖b7 e3

and Black wins. Checks on the b-file are too close to the king, while on other attempts Black achieves the Lucena position. The mobile, unfettered rook took the upper hand.

W



Macieja – K. Rasmussen
St Vincent Ech 2000

White's essential advantage is not in material, but first and foremost in the superiority of his rooks. Supporting the pawns from behind, their command of space and free movement in it can be compared with their black counterparts, which are restricted to defensive duties. However, things are not so clear: 41 c5, for instance, would be met by 41...♖c2 42 ♖b4 ♖g8 and 41 ♖c1 by 41...♖bb2. Potentially White can count on his far-advanced passed pawns, although they are temporarily blocked, but it is on the valuable c-pawn that he must pin his hopes.

41 ♖hg4!

Compelling the black rook to take a passive posture on g8 is a good first step.

41...♖g8 42 ♖c1

42 c5 is still premature and must be prepared because of 42...♖c2 43 ♖g6 ♖xc5 44 ♖xf6 e4 45 ♖f8 ♖c8.

42...f5 43 ♖gg1 f4

Pushing the e-pawn is met by advancing the c-pawn, which is quicker. Besides, note that grabbing the h-pawn by 43...♖h2 44 c5 ♖xh6 45 c6 ♖e6 46 c7 ♖ee8 leaves the king in a mating-net after the obvious 47 ♖c2.

44 c5 f3 45 c6 ♖d2

Black must prevent ♖gd1 given White's intention to play c7. 45...♖g2 would lose to 46 ♖xg2 fxg2 47 ♖g1 ♔xh6 48 ♖xg2 ♔h7 49 c7, etc.

46 c7 f2 47 ♖gf1

Now 47 ♖gd1 is too slow: 47...♖xd1 48 ♖xd1 e4.

47...♖c8 48 ♖b1!

The very moment Black hoped to have parried all the immediate threats he was confronted with a new one: 49 ♖b8 hangs over his head, while both pawns in danger, the c7-pawn and the h6-pawn, are taboo owing to it.

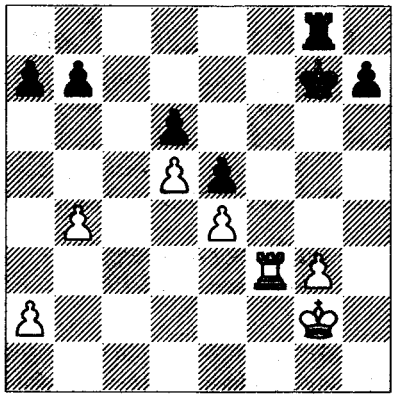
48...♖e2

48...♖c2 would be met in the same manner – by 49 ♖xf2.

49 ♖xf2! ♖xf2 50 ♖b8

Black has only a couple of useless checks at his disposal. The white rook-pair prevailed in the end because, given the circumstances, they had more space and their simpler defensive tasks did not tie them up so much.

W



Schmidt – Pritchett
Nice OL 1974

White owes his obvious advantage to his mobile rook, ready to move on the third rank and seize the open c-file, but reserving also the threat on the a-file for some later stage.

43 ♖c3

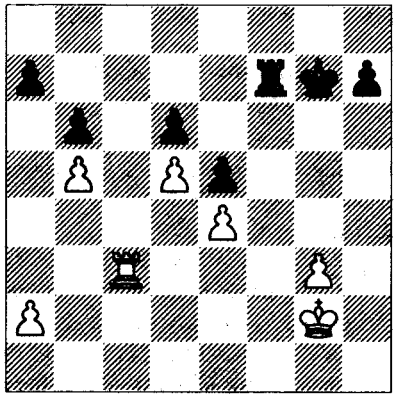
In possession of the critical file, the white rook will create pressure. Its black counterpart, on the contrary, is limited to defence, which implies severe restrictions on its movement.

43...♖f8 44 b5

For the moment the rook cannot penetrate because it will be opposed, but White is in no hurry. In the meantime options can be widened. After the text-move White threatens 45 ♖a3 ♖a8 46 b6 a6 47 ♖c3 creating a stronghold on c7. The pawn advance increases White's grip on the queenside space.

44...♖f7 45 ♖a3 b6 46 ♖c3 *(D)*

B



Here we are again, but a new weakness has been surrendered to White – that on c6.

46...♔g6 47 ♖c8 ♖d7 48 ♔h3

The king will also benefit from the spatial advantage, and this is made possible by the active rook.

48...♔f6

After 48...♔g5 49 ♖g8+ ♔f6 (not 49...♔h5 because of 50 g4+ ♔h6 51 ♔h4) 50 ♔g4 the king's penetration cannot be stopped; 50...♔f7 51 ♖h8 ♔f6 52 ♖e8 and White wins.

49 ♔h4 ♔g6 50 ♖e8 ♖c7 51 ♖e6+ ♔f7 52 ♖xd6 ♖c4 53 ♔g5 ♖xe4 54 ♔f5

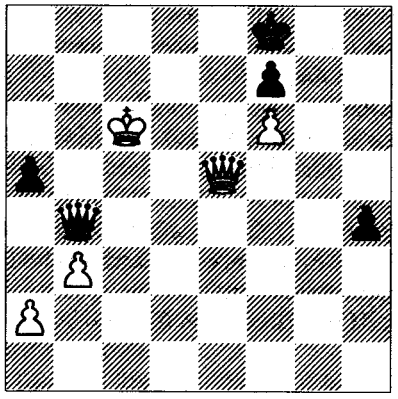
and the win is at hand.

Fettered by an inferior pawn-structure and the need to defend the second rank, the black rook had to give in gradually.

Even more than pieces, the king's health depends on free movement and free access to space. Caught in the corner or squeezed on the edge of the board in an average endgame the

king, as a rule, is endangered. The following simple examples make us sharply aware of it.

W



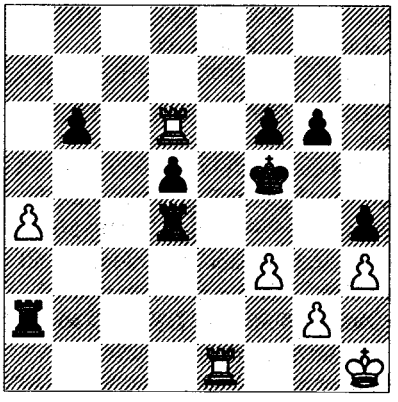
Tiviakov – Arbakov
Belgorod 1989

It took just one single move to demonstrate the true state of the black king:

64 a3! 1-0

64...♕xb3 loses to 65 ♕c5+ ♔g8 66 ♕g5+, etc., while 64...♕xa3 loses to 65 ♕b8#. Engaged in an impossible task of safeguarding the king, the black queen has been thrown off its balance and the cornered king had to pay the bill.

B



I. Almasi – Agdestein
Cappelle la Grande 1999

White is temporarily a pawn down, but he can get it back. Material, however, is not his crucial problem. More troublesome are his inactive rooks and especially his passive king.

1...g5!

By moving the pawn from its third rank, Agdestein robs 2 ♖ee6 of its point (2...♖a1+ 3 ♔h2 ♖dd1 4 ♖xf6+ ♔e5 5 ♖fe6+ ♔d4). At the same time, by postponing the capture of the a4-pawn, his rooks remain in the standby position to be doubled on their seventh rank. Of course, 1...♖axa4 is also better for Black, but in rook endgames precision is precious.

2 ♖xb6 ♖dd2 3 ♖ee6

Defending passively by 3 ♖g1 just postpones the inevitable.

3...♔f4

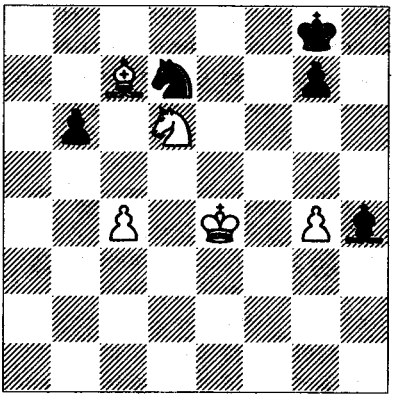
Again precise. Getting greedy and grabbing the pawn would spoil it all after 3...♖xg2 4 ♖xf6+ ♔e5 5 f4+ gxf4 6 ♖be6+ ♔d4 7 ♖xf4+.

4 ♖b4+ ♔g3 5 ♖g4+ ♔f2 6 ♖b6 f5 0-1

The final touch: 7 ♖gb4 ♔g3 or 7 ♖xg5 ♖d1+ 8 ♔h2 ♖aa1 9 ♖b2+ ♔e3.

The passive king can expect only suffering. Compare it with the king in the following examples.

W



Rublevsky – Spraggett
Groningen FIDE 1997

What makes the difference in this position is the white king's mobility. Rublevsky won without much effort. Prosaic moves were enough.

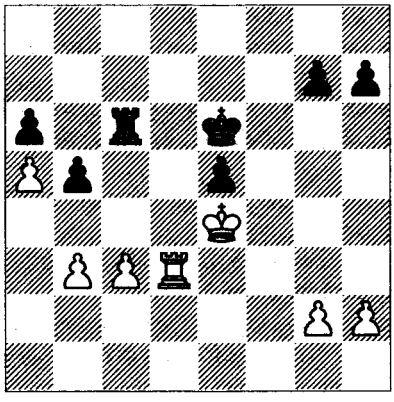
53 ♔f5 ♗f2 54 g5 ♔f8 55 ♘e4 ♗e3

After 55...♗c5 56 ♔e6 ♔e8 57 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 58 ♗xd6 Black must open the door: 58...g6 59 ♗c7 ♘c5+ 60 ♔f6 ♘e4+ 61 ♔xg6 ♘d2 62 ♔h7 is winning for White.

56 ♔e6 ♘c5+ 57 ♘xc5 bxc5 58 g6 ♔e8 59 ♗d6 ♗f2 60 ♔d5 ♗e3 61 ♗xc5

and White will win soon. The overwhelming space advantage smoothed White's path to victory.

W



Rubinstein – E. Cohn
Karlsbad 1907

We could say simply: the fewer pawn-islands, the better. However, the real power of White's position is derived from his centralized pieces and the space at their command. It is instructive to watch how quickly he disposed of his adversary.

40 ♖h3! h6 41 ♖g3

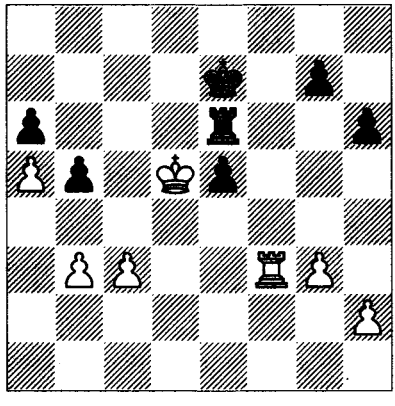
The rook provokes weaknesses by moving along the rank.

41...♔f6

41...g5 would be challenged by the unpleasant 42 h4, when 42...gxh4 loses to 43 ♖g6+, while 42...♔f6 43 hxg5+ hxg5 44 ♖f3+ ♔e6 45 ♖h3 does not survive longer.

42 ♔d5 ♖e6 43 ♖f3+ ♔e7 44 g3 *(D)*

B



One of those quiet moves Rubinstein loved! Later on we shall see how useful it is.

44...g6 45 ♖e3 ♔f6 46 c4

The point of White's pressure exerted on the e5-pawn was not to win that worthless pawn, but to tie up the defence and then create a passed pawn of his own.

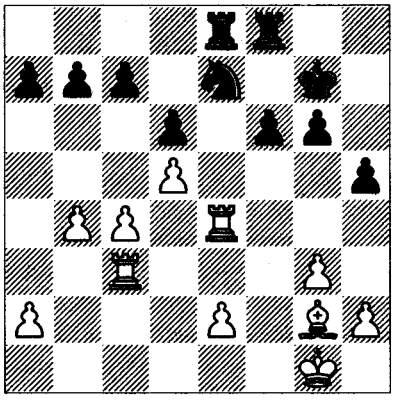
46...bxc4 47 bxc4 ♖e8 48 ♖f3+ ♔g5 49 c5 e4

Or 49...♔g4 50 ♖e3 ♔f5 51 c6 ♖d8+ 52 ♔c5 ♖d1 53 ♖c3 ♔e6 54 ♔b6. We see now it made perfect sense to keep the f4-square under surveillance and to make h4 possible.

50 h4+ ♔g4 51 ♖f4+ ♔xg3 52 ♖xe4

Black is lost. The superior king played the crucial role on the critical central squares.

W



Alekhine – Réti
Semmering 1926

Several details in the position favour White: his queenside pawns are mobile, his rooks (especially the one on the third rank) are more active, and his king enters the scene at once.

27 ♔f2 ♘c8 28 c5

The threat to penetrate to the seventh rank exacts some forced answers...

28...♖xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♖f7

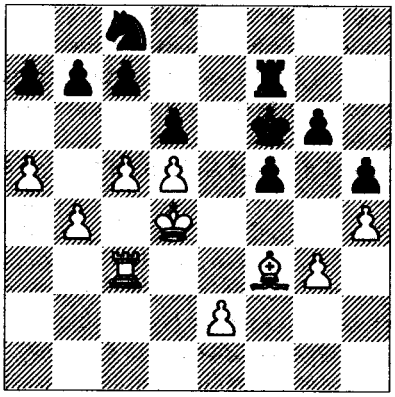
The threat is parried, but at the cost of visible passivity. In the meantime White centralizes his king.

30 ♔e3 f5 31 ♗f3 ♔f6 32 ♔d4 ♖h7 33 h4 ♖g7

Attempts at active play backfire; for example, 33...g5 34 ♖e3. Black, therefore, decides to wait and see.

34 a4 ♖f7 35 a5 *(D)*

B



35...a6?!

A consistent waiting policy was better. This makes it easier for White to break through.

36 c6 b5 37 axb6 ♘xb6 38 ♖a3 ♔e7 39 ♖xa6

39 e3 is more precise, denying Black any counterplay. The a6-pawn is doomed anyway.

39...f4 40 g4 hxg4 41 ♗xg4 f3

Clever, but not adequate.

42 ♗xf3 ♖f4+ 43 ♗e4 ♖xh4 44 ♖a7 ♔d8 45 ♖a3 ♖h2 46 ♖e3 ♖h5

The passed pawn is eventually lost, but 46...g5 is tougher.

47 ♖g3 g5 48 ♗f3 ♖h4+ 49 e4 ♖h2 50 ♖xg5 ♖b2 51 ♖g8+ ♔e7 52 ♖g7+ ♔d8 53 ♔c3 ♘a4+

This allows the king to penetrate to b5, but other moves are no better.

54 ♔c4 ♘b6+ 55 ♔b5 ♖d2 56 ♖g8+ ♔e7 57 ♖b8 ♖c2 58 ♖xb6 1-0

White's active king in the end prevailed. The space at its disposal proved a priceless asset.

Like with pieces, the king's strength and importance rise in direct proportion with spatial expansion and the king's access to it.

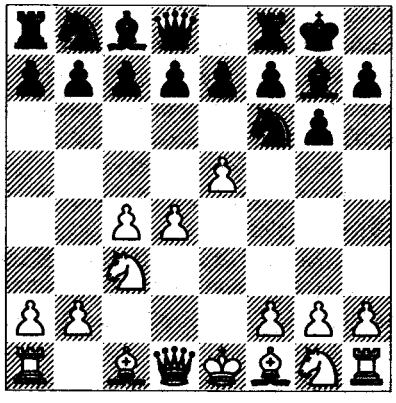
9 Overextension

We have examined the significance of space in various pawn-formations and typical piece manoeuvres leading to advantageous transformations of positional values. The long series of examples we have passed through teaches us how valuable an asset the dominance of space may be. Note, however, they have been all very concrete cases of the relations between material, space and action. Space itself has no value whatever outside of these relations. It acquires significance through pieces acting in it. Seizing space is not in itself beneficial. If it can be used for manoeuvres and action, only then can we speak of a spatial advantage. If the space won by the pawn advance is exposed to side-blows or susceptible to inroads by enemy pieces, if the expansion has not been conducted in harmony with supporting pieces, the space we command becomes a burden. It is not rare for it to burst like a bubble.

Letelier – Fischer
Leipzig OL 1960
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 0-0 5 e5?! *(D)*

B



Provoked by the delayed ...d6, White felt it was the proper moment to seize as much central space as possible. Caution teaches us to avoid such early advances. We shall watch the consequences.

5...♘e8 6 f4 d6 7 ♗e3?!

We learn from the course of the game that 7 ♘f3 is better, in order to strengthen e5. 7...dxe5 8 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♘xd1 is the best White can get, but the position does not yield more.

7...c5!

Having finished his basic development, Black is in the privileged position to strike at the expanded pawn-centre. One cannot doubt the consistency of such a decision. 6...d6 and 7...c5 have undermined the whole central structure.

8 dxc5 ♘c6!

Black discerns clearly that his lead in development has grown into a strong initiative and continues to introduce new forces into play, disregarding the minor material loss. White, unfortunately, is less aware of the growing difficulties. Instead of trying to finish his development by ♘f3 and ♗e2 as quickly as possible, he continues in the same optimistic vein.

9 cxd6 exd6 10 ♘e4? ♗f5 11 ♘g3

With 10 ♘e4 White's optimism reached an intolerable level. Now even simplifications after 11 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 12 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 13 exd6 ♗xb2 14 ♖d1 ♘b4 15 ♔f2 a5! (Fischer) favour Black. The a2-pawn is in trouble and after its fall Black's passed pawn on the a-file becomes quite a nuisance.

11...♗e6 12 ♘f3 ♕c7 13 ♕b1

Now 13 ♗e2 is too slow. 13...dxe5 involves a more than justified exchange sacrifice: 14 ♗c5 ♕a5+ 15 b4 ♘xb4 16 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 17 0-0 exf4 gives Black superb compensation.

13...dxe5 14 f5 e4!

White was hoping for 14...gxf5 15 ♘xf5, but this *zwischenzug* puts him off the track.

15 fxe6

With the fifth rank open, 15 ♕xe4 is now unsatisfactory due to 15...gxf5 16 ♕h4 ♗xb2 17 ♘g5 ♘f6 18 ♘h5 ♕a5+, etc.

15...exf3 16 gxf3 f5

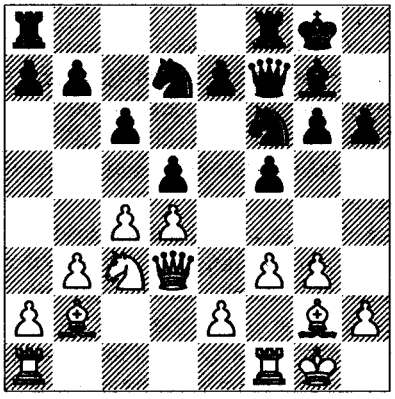
The e6-pawn does not bother Black; it will be snatched away in passing. The new threat, 17...f4, develops Black's initiative and provokes a new weakness on e4.

17 f4 ♘f6 18 ♗e2 ♖fe8 19 ♔f2 ♖xe6 20 ♖e1 ♖ae8 21 ♗f3 ♖xe3!

Black has managed to convert his lead in development into a strong initiative and now it's time to crown it with a beautiful sacrifice.

22 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 23 ♔xe3 ♕xf4+! 0-1

White's expansion had no logical basis. It was an impulsive reaction and it was premature.



Portisch – Smyslov
Portorož Ct reserve (3) 1971

The players are emerging from a Leningrad Dutch, in which Black solved his fundamental 'Dutch problem' by exchanging the light-squared bishop. Here Portisch decided upon an ill-advised step:

14 e4

It seemed that exchanges in the centre would open the game for his bishops and seize a significant space advantage for White, but soon the game took another direction.

14...dxc4 15 bxc4

If White exchanges queens by 15 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 16 bxc4, then 16...♘b6 17 c5 ♘c4, like in the game, gives Black a clear advantage; for example, 18 ♗c1 fxe4 19 fxe4 ♘xe4 20 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 21 ♗xe4 ♗xd4+ 22 ♔g2 ♖f2+ 23 ♔h3 ♗xc3 24 ♖b1 g5 25 ♖xb7 ♘e5 and the white king is caught in a tight place.

15...♘b6!

All of a sudden the full pawn-centre feels the brunt of Black's pressure.

16 c5

16 exf5 loses material to 16...♕xc4, while 16 d5 surrenders the central dark squares, and 16...♘fd7 is most unpleasant.

16...♘c4 17 ♗c1

If 17 ♖ab1, then again 17...♖ad8.

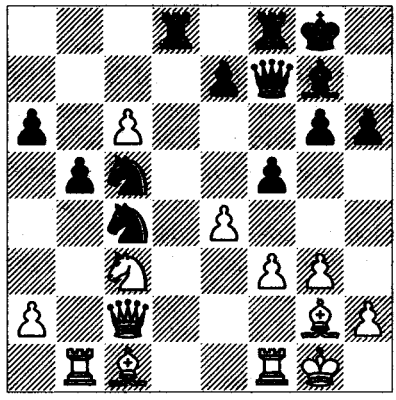
17...♖ad8 18 ♖b1 ♘d7

What was apparently White's pride, the pawn bulwark, is under tremendous pressure.

19 d5 b5 20 dxc6

In case of 20 cxb6 ♘dxb6 21 f4 cxd5 22 exd5 e6 the d5-pawn falls (23 dxe6 ♕f6).

20...♘xc5 21 ♕c2 a6 *(D)*



22 f4

22 exf5 ♕xf5 23 ♕xf5 gxf5 24 ♘e2 e5 looks rather masochistic for White.

22...♗xc3! 23 ♕xc3 ♘xe4 24 ♗xe4 fxe4 25 a4

The fianchettoed bishop was given up for a good cause. 25 ♗b2 attempts to make use of its disappearance, but Black can ignore it with 25...♔h7. After 26 ♖fd1 ♖c8 27 a4 ♖xc6 28 axb5 axb5 he threatens 29...e5. The text-move causes Black even fewer problems.

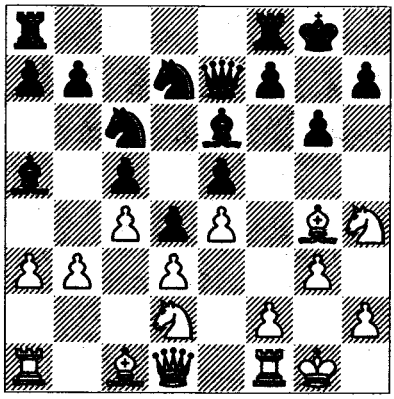
25...♕d5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♗b2

27 ♕b4 is better.

27...♖f6 28 ♗a1 ♕c5+ 29 ♔h1 ♕xc6 30 ♖bd1 e3+ 31 ♔g1 ♖d2 32 ♖xd2 exd2 33 ♕b3 ♖d6 34 ♕c3 e5 35 ♖d1 ♕c5+ 36 ♔h1 ♕e3 37 fxe5 ♖d3 0-1

Expanding influence in space is apparently a simple technical matter, but it is often brought in question by hidden tactical blows. When seizing space one should be fully alert.

B



Petrosian – Korchnoi
Moscow Ct (9) 1971

In a closed position of the English Opening White has just played 16 ♗f3-g4, provoking 16...f5. Wiser for the course of the game, one would perhaps rather respond 16...♗c3 17 ♖a2 a6, preparing for queenside action, but Black thought he could seize valuable space in the centre at once and to his favour.

16...f5 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♗f3 ♘f6?! 19 ♗g2 ♖ad8 20 ♖a2 ♗c8 21 ♖e1 ♔h8?

Several times in this series of moves Black could interpolate ...♗c3, but, misled by his mobile pawn-centre, he was aiming at a breakthrough. In the meantime White has improved the position of his pieces, increasing the pressure on it. The following tactical blow is a fruit of careful preparation.

22 b4!

White could have played this as early as move 19. Black is vulnerable on the a3-f8 diagonal and this blow takes advantage of it.

22...cxb4 23 ♘b3!

The nub of the idea. White gets rid of the unpleasant pin on the d2-knight and grabs the initiative.

23...♗b6

In case of 23...♗c7 24 ♗xc6 bxc6 25 axb4 a6 26 ♘f3 the nasty pin is still there.

24 ♗xc6! bxc6 25 axb4

Black's queen's knight supported the pawn-mass excellently and its elimination makes the central black structure shaky. On the other hand, the white king does not feel worse for the exchange of the fianchettoed bishop.

25...a6 26 ♘f3 e4

At issue is Black's pawn-centre. Given that on 26...♗c7 there is 27 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 28 f4, the central pawns are provoked to advance, an act which is obviously lacking support.

27 c5 ♗c7 28 ♘fxd4 ♕f7 29 ♖d2

An apparently ugly, but useful move: it earns time by threatening 30 ♘xc6 and brings the white pieces into harmony.

29...♗d7 30 ♗b2 ♔g8 31 ♘a5 ♗xa5 32 bxa5 ♖b8 33 ♗a1 ♖fe8

The initiative has yielded not only a material advantage, but also excellently posted pieces. Black must consider attentively the far-reaching hand of the a1-bishop. Thus on 33...♕d5 there is 34 dxe4 ♘xe4 35 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 36 ♖xd7 ♕xf2+ 37 ♔h1 and the black king cannot be protected.

34 ♖de2 ♕h5 35 ♕d2 ♔f7 36 h4 exd3 37 ♕xd3 f4 38 ♘f3 ♖xe2 39 ♕xe2 ♕xc5

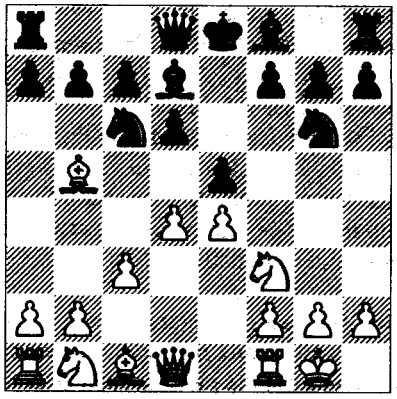
Or 39...♖e8 40 ♘e5+ ♔g8 41 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 42 ♖d1 ♗e6 43 g4, etc.

40 ♘e5+ ♔f8 41 ♘xd7+ ♘xd7 1-0

Confronted with 42 ♕e6 (42...fxg3 43 ♕h6+), Black resigned. Although mobile and apparently threatening, the array of central black pawns was shattered by tactical means.

A central pawn-mass is a sensitive unit, often susceptible to side-blows. The tissue of chess positions is intricate, its harmony made of numerous conflicting elements. It occurs commonly that a hidden tactical option turns an apparently 'strong' feature into a weakness.

W



Gunsberg – Steinitz
New York Wch (2) 1890/1

7 d5?!

Blocking the centre this early does not seem logical for several reasons. Firstly, in order to create tension in the centre White invested a valuable tempo in c3, which is now thrown to the wind; secondly, the blockade leads to simplifications favouring the more cramped side (the black knight-pair starts to feel good); thirdly, the fixed centre will be exposed to side-blows sooner or later. One would favour the routine Ruy Lopez knight manoeuvre started by 7 ♘bd2.

7...♘b8 8 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 9 ♘a3

White plans to move the queen's knight to e3, which is somewhat slow and less natural than 9 c4 followed by ♘c3.

9...♗e7 10 ♘c2 ♘c5 11 ♕e2

In view of the latent ...♘f4, 11 ♘e3 seems more consistent.

11...♕d7 12 b4

In order to make possible ♘e3 the black knight must be expelled from c5, but it stands well on a4 too, and the pawn advance brings little comfort.

12...♘a4 13 ♗d2

13 c4 a5 14 a3 f5 favours Black, but the text-move seems superfluous.

13...0-0 14 c4 f5!

Blocked centre pawns that do not help us to organize further play usually become an immobile target.

15 exf5 ♕xf5 16 ♖ac1 ♖ae8 17 ♘fe1 ♗g5 18 g3?

White was eager to get rid of the constant threat of ...♘f4, but misses the reply which costs him an exchange. 18 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 is also difficult for White, so 18 ♘e3 remains, although 18...♗xe3 19 fxe3 (or 19 ♗xe3 e4) 19...♕e4 is pleasant for Black.

18...♘c3 19 ♗xc3 ♗xc1 20 ♘g2 ♕f3 21 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 22 ♘ce3 ♗xe3 23 ♘xe3 ♖ef8

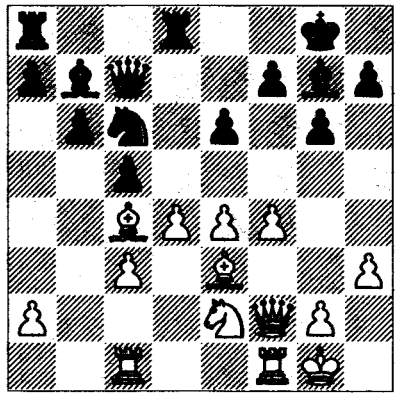
White has no compensation at all. Grabbing space in the centre and on the queenside again proved counterproductive.

In the following diagram, White is on the verge of transforming his mobile pawn-centre into an attack, but the pawn avalanche contains a weakness which can be exploited – the e4-pawn.

15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 f5 17 e5?

Facing the imminent f5, Black met his adversary's aggressive intentions most energetically

B



Gligorić – Smyslov
USSR – Yugoslavia (Kiev) 1959

and has managed to block the centre by exerting pressure on e4. Thus the white pawn bulwark remains firm, but does it open any prospects for active play? Although cumbersome, 17 ♘g3 is correct.

17...c4! 18 ♗c2 ♘c6

It becomes clear that in a position typically unfavourable to the white bishop-pair, the black knight will command a magnificent view from d5, while the whole light-squared long diagonal has been weakened.

19 g4?

White continues in an optimistic vein. In our case this pawn advance amounts to an invitation for counter-attack. No wonder that Black lines up his queen and bishop on the long diagonal at once. White should play 19 ♖b1 ♘e7 20 ♗d2 ♘d5 21 ♗d1 intending to move the bishop to f3 and oppose the sinister pressure on the long diagonal.

19...♘e7 20 ♔h2 ♕c6 21 ♘g3 b5 22 a4 a6 23 ♖b1

23 ♗d1 comes into consideration.

23...♖ab8 24 ♗d2 bxa4

19 g4 weakened the position of the white king, but dominating the open diagonal is not enough: at present White can defend all the critical squares. Smyslov, therefore, diverts enemy forces to the other wing by opening the b-file.

25 ♖a1 ♗a8 26 ♗xa4 ♕c7 27 ♖a2 ♖b6 28 gxf5 exf5 29 ♗c1?!

Again 29 ♗d1 was called for.

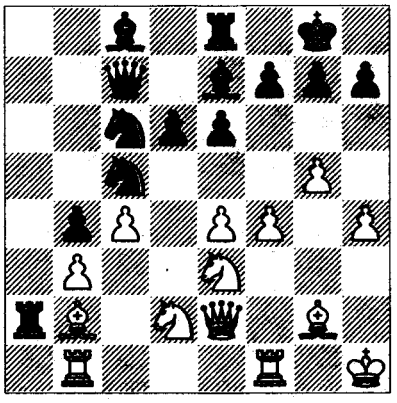
29...♘d5 30 ♘e2 a5 31 ♗c2 ♖b3! 32 ♗xb3 cxb3 33 ♖a4 ♗f8 34 ♗b2 ♘e3!

In order to keep in check Black's advance on the queenside, White was forced to transfer his pieces to that sector, which weakened his king's defences. The knight is obviously taboo (35 ♕xe3 ♕c6 costs White an exchange) and moves freely to c4, another strong square – the fruit of the earlier sacrifice.

35 ♖fa1 ♘c4 36 ♘g3 ♗e7 37 ♘f1 ♕c6 38 ♖xc4? ♕h1+ 39 ♔g3 h5! 0-1

The superiority on the diagonal finally paid off. Mate by 40...h4# cannot be averted. Black's grip on the light squares was so strong that in the end it led to total paralysis. We learn once more that a blockade which cannot be used as a firm point for further action is a useless possession.

B



Bisguier – Petrosian
USA – USSR (New York) (4) 1954

White has occupied a sizeable portion of the kingside, but for the time being his advanced pawns are no real threat: no coordinated effort stands behind them. Black, on the contrary, has deployed his forces logically. The latent pressure on the second rank, on the sensitive point b3 and in the centre all add to the stability of his defence.

23...♕d8

Another good defensive step: understanding he will have to close the long dark-squared diagonal by ...e5, Black moves out of range of a d5-knight.

24 ♖f3 ♗f8 25 ♖g3 e5! 26 f5 ♘d4

Black responds to White's pawn assault with energetic play in the centre. We see now why the queen retreated to d8 and how the bishop retreat to f8 enhanced the e8-rook's pressure on the centre; 27 ♗xd4 exd4 28 ♘d5 would fail now due to 28...♗xf5.

Given that 27 ♕d1 does not work either because of 27...♘d3, White is immediately pushed into depressing defence.

27 ♕f1 ♘dxb3 28 ♘xb3 ♘xb3 29 ♕e1 ♘c5

By giving back material, Black looks for new targets.

30 ♕xb4 ♗b7 31 ♘d5 ♖a4

The apparent menace on the kingside has lost its initial impetus, while the queenside counterplay is taking over.

32 ♕d2

On 32 ♕c3, 32...♗a6 33 ♘e3 ♕b8! looks paralysing.

32...♗xd5!

Black is not satisfied with the prosaic move 32...♖xc4, when 33 ♗c3 frees White.

33 ♕xd5 ♖b4

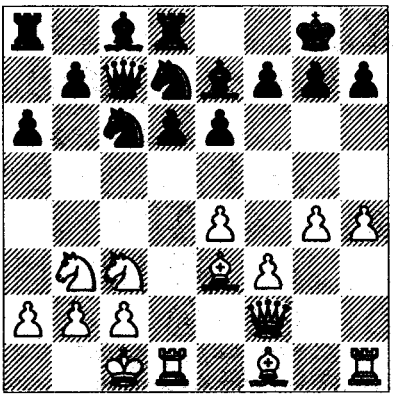
The final point. Pinned on the b-file, White succumbs to the growing pressure.

34 ♗f3 ♕a8 35 ♕d2 ♕b7 36 ♖g2 ♖b8

White is hopelessly tied up and will suffer decisive losses.

Expanding on the flank needs a more secure centre than Bisguier managed to create.

B



Ganguly – Svidler
Bled OL 2002

This position is defined by opposite-side castling and this positional imbalance suggests the plans for both sides. White has started a typical pawn assault by seizing space on the kingside.

Black is entrenched on his second rank and it takes time to reach the defensive line and start the real battle.

14...b5 15 g5 ♘ce5 16 h5 b4 17 ♘e2 a5

When you expand on the wing, there is always a question what sort of counterplay you can expect on the other side of the board. And immediately there is another logical question: whether one's attack is quick enough to engage the opponent in defence before his counterattack reaches an alarming level. This time Black is quick enough: he threatens 18...a4 19 ♘bd4 b3, which compels White to spend a valuable tempo on his king's security.

18 ♔b1 a4 19 ♘bd4 ♘c5 20 g6 b3

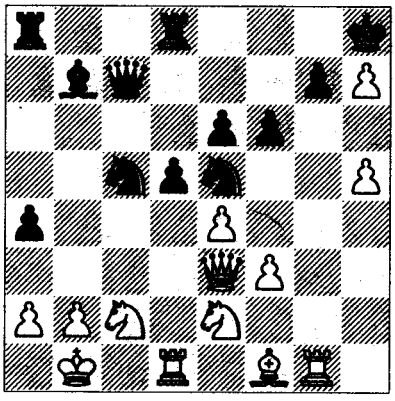
If you compare the two attacks, you notice that the pawns have reached the enemy trenches simultaneously, but Black's attack is better supported by his pieces.

21 gxh7+? ♔h8

After this one feels that the tension on the kingside suddenly subsides and the pawn assault loses its impetus. It is true that the g-file has been opened, but it takes some tempi to build meaningful pressure on it. White should have played 21 gxf7+ followed by 22 ♘c3 (22 cxb3 axb3 23 a3 ♘cd3 forebodes nothing good).

22 ♖g1 ♗f6 23 ♕g2 ♗b7 24 ♗g5 ♗xg5 25 ♕xg5 f6 26 ♕e3 bxc2+ 27 ♘xc2 d5! *(D)*

W



Having beaten back the first wave of assault, Black counter-attacks in the centre. His actively posted pieces open the game to his advantage.

28 h6 g6 29 ♕f4 dxe4!

An excellent reaction. The black king will find a refuge at h7, but the white king will look in vain for safety.

30 ♕xf6+ ♔xh7 31 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 32 ♘ed4 exf3

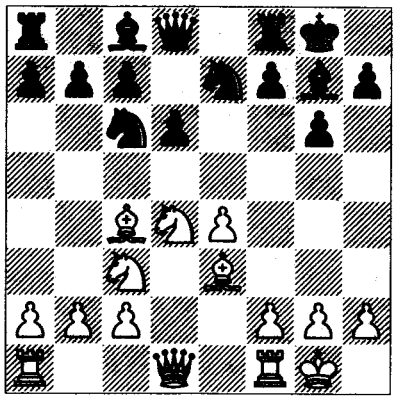
Black's counterplay has been crowned not only by a material advantage, but by powerful coordination of all his pieces. White is weak on his back rank, and has played all his strong cards. His downfall is now quick and inevitable.

33 ♖g5 ♗e4 34 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 35 ♖xe5 ♖xd4 36 ♔c1 ♖d5 37 ♖xd5 ♗xd5

White has no chances of salvation.

Looking back at this struggle and seeking critical moments, it dawns upon us that the germ of failure was there at the beginning. The kingside advance was neither prepared nor supported well. From the seized space no pressure was generated.

W



Rosenthal – Steinitz
Vienna 1873

Willing to increase his influence in the centre and rob his opponent of yet another central square, Rosenthal now played...

9 f4

However, in spite of appearances it proved an incautious step.

9...♘a5 10 ♗d3 d5!

Asking for more, White gets less. Seizing space opened the way for this central counterblow, which solves Black's structural inferiority.

11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13 c3 ♖d8 14 ♕c2 ♘c4 15 ♗xc4 ♕xc4

The pressure exerted by Black after the freeing 10...d5 has greatly improved his share of

space and activity. Black can rely on his potentially active bishop-pair and superior pawn-structure.

16 ♕f2

Instead of dreaming of f5 and giving his opponent a free hand, White should act more energetically, because time does not work to his favour. 16 b3 is better.

16...c5 17 ♘f3 b6 18 ♘e5 ♕e6 19 ♕f3

The consequences of 9 f4 are only too visible now. The light squares have been surrendered to Black's queen's bishop, while the position of the white king has been exposed. White can prevent the appearance of the bishop on b7, but only temporarily.

19...♗a6 20 ♖fe1 f6 21 ♘g4 h5 22 ♘f2 ♕f7 23 f5?

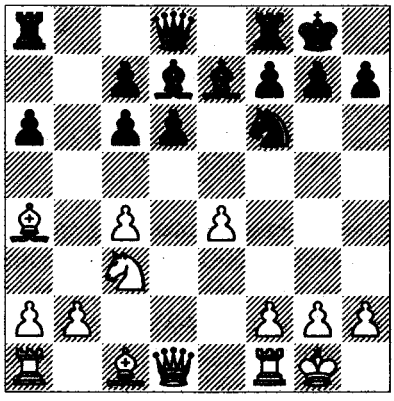
In such positions one should take care to keep the pawn-structure as compact as possible. Loose pawns like the f5-pawn are an easier prey. Facing ...♗b7, better is 23 ♖ad1 ♗b7 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♕g3.

23...g5 24 ♖ad1 ♗b7 25 ♕g3 ♖d5

The f5-pawn is a much more interesting trophy than the a2-pawn (25...♕xa2 26 ♕c7).

26 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 27 ♖d1 ♕xf5 28 ♕c7 ♗d5 29 b3 ♖e8 30 c4 ♗f7 31 ♗c1 ♖e2 32 ♖f1 ♕c2

White's position has deteriorated beyond hope. When the centre is undefined, one must be very cautious with a kingside pawn advance.



Byvshev – Simagin
Lvov 1951

11 f4

Here this move is even less justified than in the previous example. 12 e5 is not much of a threat, while it loosens the king's position and exposes it to counter-attack.

11...d5! 12 cxd5 ♗c5+ 13 ♔h1 ♘g4

We could add that 12 e5 would have been met in the same way. In both cases the white king feels vulnerable. Black threatens 14...♕h4 15 h3 ♕g3 with mate and the play takes on a forcing character.

14 ♕e1 cxd5 15 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 16 h3

On 16 ♘xd5 there is 16...f5, when the knight loses its foothold in the centre, while 16 exd5 ♖fe8 is hardly worth contemplating.

16...d4! 17 hxg4 dxc3 18 ♕xc3 ♗d4 19 ♕f3 ♖ab8

White has won a pawn, but his king is insecure, while the pressure on the b2-pawn prevents normal development.

20 ♖d1 c5 21 ♗e3

Naturally, clinging to the material surplus was dangerous, if possible at all, and Byvshev makes a logical decision to develop.

21...♖xb2 22 ♖ac1 ♕a4 23 f5?

This is too optimistic. White should seek a draw by 23 ♗xd4 cxd4 24 e5.

23...♗xe3 24 ♕xe3 ♖b4!

By sacrificing a pawn again, Black probes not only the weakness of the fourth rank, but of the king itself.

25 ♖e1 ♖e8 26 ♖xc5 h6 27 e5

After 27 ♕f3 ♖bxe4 28 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 it is even more difficult to protect the king.

27...♖xg4 28 e6 fxe6 29 fxe6 ♕xa2 30 ♕e2 ♕a4 31 e7?!

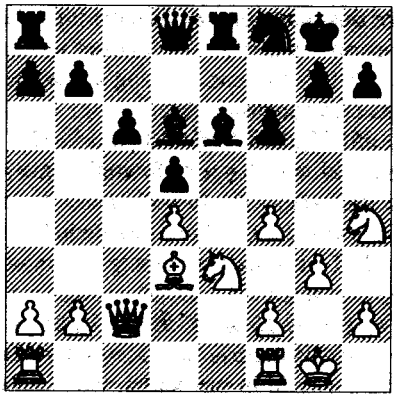
The king's security should be a priority in such a porous situation. Instead of the losing text-move, 31 ♖h5 would shield the king and keep hopes alive.

31...♖h4+ 32 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 33 ♕e3 ♖xe7 34 ♕xd4 ♖xe1+ 35 ♔f2 ♖xd4

Black has a won endgame. The lesson is simple and perennial: do not try to seize space on the wing if the centre is not stable!

In the game from which the diagram overleaf is taken, earlier exchanges broke up the compact white pawn-structure into three islands, leaving the d4-pawn isolated. As if unaware of the structural damage, White has just played the suspect 15 ♘f3-h4.

B



Alekhine – Em. Lasker
New York 1924

15...♗c7! 16 b4?!

It is difficult to acknowledge one's own error, but many a time it is the wisest thing we can do. 16 ♘f3 was the reasonable step to make. The following moves demonstrate that seizing space, with an unclear hope of causing a weakness at c6, was unrealistic.

16...♗b6 17 ♘f3 ♗f7!

Having detected the weakness, the d4-pawn, Black's bishops start to harass it. The idea is 18...♗h5, when White must make some awkward decisions.

18 b5

The somewhat bizarre 18 ♗f5 ♗h5 19 ♗g4, proposed by Tartakower, can be answered by 19...♖xe3 20 ♗xh5 ♖e4. The modest line 18 ♖fd1 ♗h5 19 ♗e2, given by Alekhine after the game, corresponds more to the positional requirements, but 19...♖e4 continues to exert unpleasant pressure.

18...♗h5! 19 g4 ♗f7 20 bxc6 ♖c8 21 ♕b2 bxc6 22 f5 ♕d6

Grabbing space on both wings resulted in lasting weaknesses of the white pawn-structure and the king itself. The b8-h2 diagonal is obviously worrying. For the moment Black threatens 23...♕f4.

23 ♘g2 ♗c7

Black now threatens 23...h5 24 h3 ♖e4.

24 ♖fe1 h5 25 h3

Trying to lessen the growing pressure by 25 g5 fxg5 26 ♘e5 does not work due to 26...♘d7, while the text-move allows the f8-knight to join the attack via h7 and g5.

25...♘h7 26 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♖e1 ♖b8 28 ♕c1 ♘g5

The weak diagonal does not hold any longer, and White is reduced to desperate tries.

29 ♘e5

29 ♘xg5 fxg5 30 ♕xg5 loses to 30...♕h2+ 31 ♔f1 ♖b2.

29...fxe5 30 ♕xg5 e4 31 f6 g6

The last trap was set and avoided. Alekhine had in mind 31...♕h2+? 32 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 33 ♔e2 exd3+ 34 ♔xd3 ♕xh3+ 35 ♘e3 ♔f8 36 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 37 ♔c2! winning.

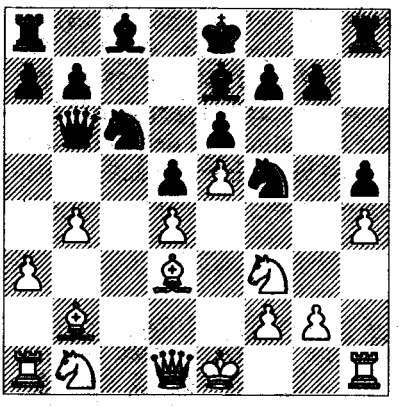
32 f4

32 ♕h6 ♕f8 33 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 34 ♗b1 ♖b4 would leave no doubts about the result.

32...hxg4 33 ♗e2 gxh3 34 ♗h5 ♖b2 35 ♘h4 ♕xf4 36 ♕xf4 ♗xf4 0-1

Winning space yields fruit when it remains under full surveillance of the forces which occupied it and as long as widening one's control leaves no weaknesses in the rear.

B



Grishchuk – Lputian
Bled OL 2002

The initial phase seemed to favour White. His pawn wedge gained space in the centre and set the scene for a later pawn advance on the queenside. However, Black's next move questioned his opponent's policy:

11...a5!

Black makes this advance at a moment when 12 b5 is not good in reply, because by occupying the b5-square White would allow 12...♘cxd4. The undermining pawn move forces White into the following line:

12 ♗xf5 exf5 13 ♘c3 ♗e6 14 b5 a4!

The idea behind 11...a5 is that now 15 bxc6 ♕xb2 16 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 17 cxb7 would be countered by 17...♕c3+ 18 ♘d2 0-0 19 ♖b1 ♖xd4 (or 19...♗b4!?) 20 b8♕ ♖xb8 21 ♖xb8+ ♗f8 with counterplay.

15 ♕d3 ♘a7 16 0-0 ♖c8

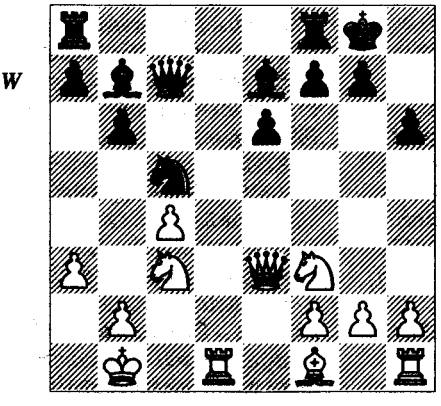
The weakness of the b5-pawn matches the weakness of the a4-pawn, facilitating useful developing moves. The rook hurries to take its optimal position at c4 and increase the pressure on the d4-pawn.

17 ♗c1 ♖c4 18 ♖d1

In order to swap the bishops at g5 and lessen the constant pressure on the a3-pawn, first the d4-pawn must be supported, but it also costs a tempo. 18 ♖b1 would defend the b5-pawn, though after 18...0-0 Black is quick to double rooks and increase the pressure.

18...♘xb5 19 ♘e2 ♕c6

There is no doubting Black's advantage. The disharmony between White's advancing pawns and the supporting pieces caused serious difficulties.



Korchnoi – Kramnik
Groningen (PCA) 1993

Better developed and possessing the bishop-pair, Black has achieved one of those comfortable positions in which the opponent must be very careful. 17 ♘e5 could be met not only by 17...♗f6 18 f4 ♖ad8, but also by 17...♘e4 18 f4 (or 18 ♘xe4 ♕xe5) 18...♖ad8, which is pleasant for Black. The quiet 17 ♗e2 comes into consideration. However, White embarked on a very optimistic idea:

17 b4? ♘d7 18 ♘b5 ♕c8 19 ♘d6 ♗xd6 20 ♖xd6 ♕c7 21 ♖d2 a5!

Simple, but strong and logical. Unless White blocks the queenside by 22 b5, which would not only relinquish the strong c5-square to the black knight, but also create an effective black pawn surplus on the kingside, he must allow his adversary to open the a-file.

22 ♗d3 axb4 23 axb4 ♖a4

And all of a sudden serious threats come down the a-file. White's violent expansion is quickly shown to be dubious.

24 ♖b2 ♖fa8 25 ♖d1 ♗xf3!

Quite unexpectedly this hits White hard.

26 ♕xf3 ♘e5 27 ♕g3 ♕c6! 0-1

The knight is taboo, 28...♖a1+ is threatened and 28 b5 ♕c5 does not change the nature of the position. White seized more space than he could keep under control. When the a-file was opened, his king's position proved untenable.

The lust for expansion, as Nimzowitsch put it so well, may have its price. Like in war, sometimes it's easier to occupy terrain than to keep it under control. Only in complete harmony with the material which won it does the space become a precious asset and a basis for further fruitful transformations of values.

Once more we become aware that open space, freedom and quickness of movement and material values are intrinsically connected and interdependent. It's a firm point in chess understanding which strengthens our positional judgement and helps our positional assessments. Secret links tie these elements in the rich tissue of chess games. The purpose of this book has been to reveal their interrelations and emphasize their importance. We should keep in mind that the complex play of transformations is the life of chess, the time of transition and metamorphosis its crucial moment, worthy of players' exceptional attention and dedicated study.

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GAMBIT

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